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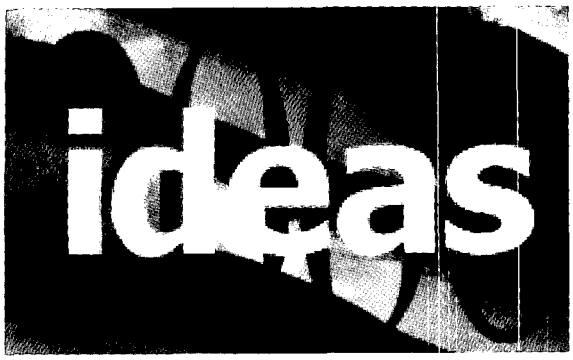

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Letters

Auden to Algorithms

Mr. Peters chides the National Commission on Terrorism for monitoring the activities of foreign students who might, as an example, switch their majors from English to nuclear physics ("Tilting at Windmills," July/August 2000). He is quite right to object to such frivolity. Anyone who has ever pondered the ways of students in American colleges and universities knows that, although there are plenty of English majors who once declared themselves to be science or mathematics majors, there are none who made the switch in reverse order.

JACK A. PIERCE
Goshen, N.Y.

Sin City

Your article "Sex in the Digital City" in the July/August 2000 issue, made my stomach turn a few knots. I don't find this sexual business alluring. AOL and the Internet need to clean up their act. Why? Because when my son goes on the chat lines to discuss everything from Harry Potter to Digimon, there is some pervert out there recording his email address. They send subject line messages that read: "Why are You Mad at Me?" and when I open up the email it's some kind of disgusting sex message aimed at minors. Sure the Super Information Highway is considered to be the Wild, Wild West, but this kind of nonsense created by the sex industry needs to stop!

PAUL DALE ROBERTS
Elk Grove, Calif.

"E"gads!

"Frances X. Clines"? With an "e"? ("Who's Who," July/August 2000) It was bad enough when Shelly Binn, the old [*New York Times*] night city editor, used to call us all Frankie (Clines, Lynn, Prial). But this is taking the gender thing too far.

Maybe I'll set up a Website for people who have been similarly dissed.

FRANK PRIAL (FRANCIS J.)
New York City, N.Y.

Interstate Money

I've read *The Washington Monthly* for over 20 years, love the magazine, and especially enjoy "Tilting at Windmills." I tend to agree with your critiques of American politics. This is the first time I've been moved to take serious issue with you. The subject was the influence of out-of-state money on politics ("Tilting at Windmills," July/August 2000).

While your logic on out-of-state money may be correct for state legislative campaigns, it does not hold for Congress. Members of the U.S. Senate and U.S. House of Representatives determine not only the specific provincial interests of their home state constituents but also the interests of the nation as a whole.

Citizens of West Virginia might technically be represented by Sens. Byrd and Rockefeller and Congressmen Mollohan, Wise, and Rahall, but their interests, like it or not, are also in the hands of 98 senators and 434 representatives they had no chance to vote for or against. The "right to contribute" is every West Virginian's only way to influence the composition of entire legislative bodies.

And what about disenfranchised citizens of the District of Columbia like me? Would you add our right to contribute to the list of rights of which we are deprived, or would you grant us dispensation to give to candidates in all 50 states?

I enjoyed "One Cheer For Soft Money" by Steven E. Schier. Finally someone who can distinguish between the good and the bad in political campaign finance. I think Mr. Schier is onto something important.

ALLEN F. CLOBRIDGE
Washington, D.C.

Not Quite St. Ronald

"Tilting at Windmills" (July/August 2000), in appraising presidents, states that "Truman and Reagan are close to canonization." I buy Truman, but Reagan?

Although the growing disconnect between Americans and their government is thought to have its roots in the Vietnam fiasco, it is very clear that Reagan honed this mistrust in his "get the government off your back" philosophy.

So, do you really believe that Reagan, the primary architect of the people's cynicism and detachment from their government which includes their elected officials, is being "canonized" by a majority of Americans?

I think not. In reality you mean hard-core fringe conservatives plus the well-meaning but misguided Christian Coalition type folk, both groups, for-

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tunately, a distinct—albeit politically powerful—noisy minority.

TALMON R. MAGER
Seattle, Wash.

The editor replies: You're right—except I think the majority of Americans, including me, loved his speech in Normandy and his call to "tear down this wall" in Berlin.

And The Oscar Goes To...

Nicholas Thompson ("Greenspan? Gipper? Gates?" June 2000) awards Alan Greenspan the prize for "best supporting actor" in "best director" Bill Clinton's box-office smash, "The Great Economic Boom." But before giving out any Oscars, Thompson should first have checked his old Econ 101 textbook, with its rule-of-thumb that a tighter fiscal policy should normally be offset by a looser monetary policy. But did Greenspan ease when the Clinton-Rubin team, without a single Republican vote, pushed through Congress the 1993 budget-balancing package? Hah! Greenspan and his colleagues on the Federal Open Market Committee doubled the level of the federal-funds rate, from three to six percent. (Thompson's language was misleading when he said that Greenspan "hiked rates by three percent.") The business recovery continued in the face of the tighter monetary policy, but the voters didn't think that recovery was rapid enough, and so gave the Gingrich Republicans the Congressional majority in November 1994 that they managed to maintain for the rest of the decade.

Did any of this make any difference in the life of the Republic? Well, if Greenspan had acted differently in 1994, George Mitchell and Tom Foley would probably still be running things on Capitol Hill. And in that case, Kenneth Starr would now be toiling anonymously in the groves of academe at Pepperdine, and a certain intern in a black beret would still be delivering pizza to the Oval Office without anyone even noticing her.

WILLIAM BURKE
San Francisco, Calif.

The writer is a retired Federal Reserve economist.

Doubting Cockburn

In your June issue, Andrew Cockburn reports that on March 23, 1983, a Navy captain shouted, on hearing President Reagan's TV proposal to develop a missile system in space, "I'm rich, I'm rich, I'm rich" ("Missile Millionaires," June 2000).

What's the source of that quotation? Was Cockburn a member of the Fort Myer Officers' Club? An officer elsewhere? Or was he a guest? Was he there at all?

How could an active-duty officer get rich on the strength of the President's proposal? And if somehow the captain foresaw a way to get rich, wouldn't he also have enough good sense not to shout about it? And enough sense of decorum not to shout at all? Did Cockburn tape the "shouts"? Did he report them anywhere at that time? If not, why not? Did anyone else report them?

MERVIN BLOCK
New York, N.Y.

P.S. Chances are, you could have run Cockburn's anecdote under the heading "Utterances We Doubt Ever Got Uttered."

The author responds:
I have spent many happy hours as a guest at the Fort Myer Officers' Club. If Mr. Block ever made his way there, he would find it a place that harbors not only the worst of our military industrial complex, but also some of the best, most patriotic and insightful thinkers in the U.S. defense system. Mr. Block should try and get himself invited. He would have the chance to shed his smug and ignorant complacency and garner some of the education he evidently needs.

Franklin C. Spinney, then as now an analyst in the Office of the Secretary of Defense, and Pierre M. Sprey, at that time a consultant to OSD (he is one of the very small group responsible for the creation of the two most successful warplanes in the U.S. inventory—the A-10 and the F-16) were witness to the unedifying spectacle of the Navy captain and his friend reacting to Reagan's star wars speech. I have confirmed with them that my account is accurate.

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Tilting at Windmills

BY CHARLES PETERS

Lady Rilke and Mrs. Miró • The Steward's Daughter • Johann, George Frederick, and Les The Managerial Metamorphosis • The New York Window

I HAVE A DEEP DISTASTE FOR musical instruments that have to be plugged in. Fifty years ago the only respectable musician who used an electric cord was the guitarist Les Paul. He was actually quite good but I now regard him as the beginning of a horrid trend that really exploded into dominance in the 1960s, with musical stages becoming a maze of wires and speakers. The latest outrage is that pipe organs in churches are being replaced by electric devices. Bach and Handel by synthesized sound! The last outpost of sanity seems to be the Society for the Preservation of Bluegrass Music. It has rules prohibiting electric instruments.

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IN JULY, CONNIE MARIANO, the Filipino-American White House physician was made an admiral. Her father had been a Navy steward, and therein lies a tale I am proud to tell. Thirty years ago, Timothy Ingram wrote an article for this magazine entitled, "The Navy's Floating Plantation." It described how Filipinos in the U.S. Navy were employed almost exclusively as servants to high-ranking officers and in the executive dining rooms of the brass. The result was the kind of impact we always want for an article but rarely occurs. Admiral Elmo R. Zumwalt, then the Navy's top officer, immediately issued an order opening up many more jobs for Filipinos. The end result of that order was the opportunity given to Connie Mariano. She recalls that her father had worked for six admirals. As a young girl, she sometimes accompanied him when he went to the admirals' houses: "Never by the front door. We always went through the garage, the backdoor, or the kitchen."

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THE KOREAN WAR LASTED three years. Our next war on the Asian continent, Vietnam, was three times as long. Why the difference? One reason, I suspect is that in Korea, the sons and daughters of the influential were being killed, while in Vietnam the powerless did most of the dying. James Brady, a writer who fought in Korea, recently described his comrades: "Young men like Wild Horse Callan, off his daddy's New Mexico ranch; Doug Bradlee, the big, red-haired Harvard tackle who wanted to teach; handsome Dick Brennan, who worked in a Madison Avenue ad agency; Mack Allen, the engineer from the Virginia Military Institute; Bob Bjornsen, the giant forest ranger; and Carly Rand of the Rand McNally clan." Brady goes on to describe another of his comrades in Korea, John Chafee, the future governor of Rhode Island and U.S. Senator who died last year: "A college wrestling star, he dropped out of Yale at 19 to join the Marines after Pearl Harbor, fighting on Guadalcanal as a private, then made officers candidate school and fought on Okinawa." Any man who took part in either of these brutal battles would have a right to feel he had done his part. But after graduating from Yale and Harvard Law School, "he went back to commanding riflemen in combat [in Korea]. A man with money and connections (his great-grandfather and great uncle both had served as governor), he never took the easy out."

If Cheney doesn't trust the government to run Head Start, how can he trust it to shoot a bullet out of the sky?

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JOHN CHAFEE IS one of my heroes. Another, Paul Taylor, has an article in this issue. Paul, you may recall, is the former *Washington Post* political reporter who gave up a career that had him well on his way to journalistic stardom, to devote himself to the cause of campaign finance reform; trying among other things to deal with the failure of broadcasters to do their part. Recently a bipartisan national commission that Taylor had helped form recommended that each station give five minutes a night for 30 nights before the election to letting the candidates speak. They could be local, state, or national candidates, just so both sides were given a fair opportunity. Only two percent of the stations have agreed to make even this modest sacrifice even though their very existence is due to licenses given them by the public.

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AS YOU MAY KNOW SAN Fransisco's Candlestick Park has been renamed 3Com Park. This is part of a general trend that has one sports team after another selling the naming rights to its stadium to a corpo-

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ration. This violates a lovely tradition of evocatively named ballparks from the Polo Grounds to Fenway Park to the recently christened Camden Yards. The one time-honored exception to this rule permits the use of the name of the owner as with Wrigley Field in Chicago and the old Crosley Field in Cincinnati. I believe that this was also the case with Ebbets Field in Brooklyn. But I don't know. If anyone out there does know, please write.

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REMEMBER OUR ITEM ABOUT HOW insurance corporations overcharged blacks? I am delighted to report that one of them, a very big one in fact, has agreed to make restitution. American General has agreed to pay $206 million to settle a class action suit brought on behalf of their black policy holders.

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THE GREAT TRADITION OF women's magazines being on the take continues to this day. In the past they were notable for praising the products of frequent advertisers and the resorts, airlines, and cruise ships that gave their writers free trips. Now they're touting the plastic surgeons that give their writers free face lifts and tummy tucks. "There's little question," writes Anne Jarrell of *The New York Times*, "that accepting free treatment is widespread at women's magazines, where most articles about the booming fields of cosmetic surgery and dermatology appear." Does favorable coverage result? Just ask Dr. Patricia Wexler, a Manhattan dermatologist: "All the time I give free botox, collagen, chemical peels to journalists who will write about it. They quote me as if I were George Washington."

One writer dared to criticize a procedure performed for her by Dr. David Bank. "That's the only time that has happened to me," was the physician's indignant response.

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WHEN I ENTERED COLUMBIA AS A student years ago, I quickly realized that if you wanted to impress your peers with your sophistication you had to drop the right names. The problem is that often I learned little more than the name. This had its hazards. One girl I was trying to impress saw through me when I referred to the poet Rilke and the painter Miró as "she."

The insecurities of growing up may excuse this kind of folly in the young. But we all know mature adults who continue to drop names to make it appear they're in the know. What is their excuse? I'm interested in pursuing this matter. What are the names people need to drop today? Similarly, what are the ideas and causes—artistic and political—that they feel they must be able to make a hip shorthand reference to? And what does this need say about them? Perhaps those of you whose hearts did not beat faster at my call for help on Ebbets Field will be inspired to come to my aid on this matter.

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DURING THE REPUBLICAN convention, one delegate, arguing for tax reduction asked an interviewer: "Do you want to work for yourself or work for the government?" This is the way many Republicans think. To them, taxes are what some abstract entity called government takes from them. They don't stop to think that these taxes pay for the social security and veterans pensions their parents get. They pay for a Federal Drug Administration to guard against unsafe drugs, etc. ... It's weird. When you remind them of those facts they seem to grudgingly agree. But you can be sure that the next Republican you meet will say "I want to work for myself, not for the government."

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USUALLY CONSERVATIVES disparage government programs. Why then do they have this absolute conviction that the government can succeed in building a system that seeks and destroys incoming inter-continental ballistic missiles? If Dick Cheney doesn't trust the government to run Head Start, how can he trust it to shoot a bullet out of the sky?

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MORE ABOUT JOHN GIELGUD. He was such a great actor that it seemed that there wasn't a part he could not play. This, alas, proved to be untrue when he cast himself in a New York production of Euripides' *Medea* starring Judith Anderson and directed by Gielgud. When the actor playing the swashbuckling Jason became ill, Gielgud stepped into his shoes. But Gielgud was slightly effeminate and the resulting performance was embarrassing. This experience taught me a lesson. One is always tempted to think a great artist can do anything. But we all have limits. This is true of the writers with whom I have worked. Many of them are so gifted that you are tempted to ask them to exceed their limit. But you can't ask the unfunny to be funny. And you can't expect good writers to automatically be good editors. And friends in education tell me that a similar truth applies when it is assumed that good teachers will make good administrators. Often this does not prove to be the case.

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ANOTHER TREND THAT MAKES me nervous is the rapidly decreasing attention span of young America. "The average Internet download takes 22 seconds," reads a recent Lucent Technologies ad. "That's 22 seconds longer than a 10-year-old wants to wait." The ad continues, "Today's kids are born believing that fast enough isn't fast enough."

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MICHAEL WALDMAN IN HIS new book *Potus Speaks* describes "one of the few times" in his years as Clinton's chief White House speechwriter that corporate lobbyists tried to directly influence a presidential address. It was, he explained, "the broadcasters—lobbyists for one of the television networks. Our reform plan expected to include

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measures to trim the rates charged by broadcasters to candidates." One lobbyist "slapped his knees. You don't really want to do this, right? ... The TV network he was lobbying for had excoriated Clinton regularly for failing to tame the Washington system."

By the way, the columnist Martin Schram tells us *Broadcasting & Cable Magazine* heralded the outset of this campaign spending spree with a report headlined: 'Happy Days Are Here Again.'"

If you didn't capture her attention, she was sure to turn to that certifiable celebrity or that Greek-god handsome guy you prayed would be an idiot.

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WHEN CRITICS say that government can't work, there is one answer that occurs to many of us immediately: the efficiency of the meter maids who so relentlessly ticket us when we overstay the limit for even five minutes. I have another example: bureaucrats who can do nothing else seem to manage getting nice cars for themselves (or their bosses). Consider Robert P. Newman, the director of the District's Parks and Recreation Department. Although he had a $3 million federal grant to put 3,000 low-income children into a summer camp, only 150 children were enrolled when the camp started. Five weeks later counselors stopped working because they still hadn't been paid. But Williams managed to get himself a $24,000 Ford Crown Victoria. Indeed, according to *The Washington Times*, last year alone the District spent $12.6 million for 784 vehicles, including 74 SUVs, giving the District a total of 301 of these gas guzzlers.

In my home state of West Virginia, a Supreme Court justice was criticized for getting himself a car paid for by the taxpayers. His defense: "Everyone else, every office, gets not only vehicles, but several vehicles—from assistants in the auditor's office to the governor's wife." According to the *Charleston Gazette-Mail*, the justice was wrong about the auditor's assistants but right about the governor's wife and practically everyone else in the state government, which now owns nearly 6,000 passenger vehicles.

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IF YOU HAVE suspected that the legal profession is not too severe with its own miscreants, consider that of the 118,891 lawyers against whom ethics complaints were filed in 1996, the last year for which figures are available, only 1.57 percent were suspended or disbarred. And if you know a lawyer who tends to bend the rules advise him to move to Hawaii or Washington where the punished number only half of one percent.

Then, of course, there is the medical profession, which goes to incredible lengths to conceal its own wrongdoers. "75 percent of the hospitals in the U.S. never reported an adverse action against any physician," writes James B. Stewart in *The Wall Street Journal*. Stewart isn't just guessing. His figures come from an official report of the Department of Health and Human Services. Stewart has written a terrifying book about one doctor, Michael Swango, who appears to have gotten away with as many as 35 murders of his patients at hospitals where he was employed *after* having been convicted of arsenic poisoning.

When Stewart was invited to testify before the House Commerce Committee, he says his appearance was blocked by the AMA and the Ohio delegation to Congress. Why? Because, "At Ohio State, doctors recommended that Dr. Swango be licensed to practice medicine after he was accused of injecting a patient with a paralyzing drug and after the death rate soared among his patients (one of whom was cited as a murder victim by the grand jury)." The AMA and Ohio State can't be wrong!

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NOW FOR SOME GOOD NEWS. First, Judith S. Kaye, New York state's chief judge, has decreed that nonviolent criminals who are drug addicts be offered treatment programs with their sentences suspended as long as they stick to their treatment. This is a reform this magazine has long advocated and could be a great step forward if both quality treatment is provided and potential backsliders know the penalty will be swift and sure.

The second piece of good news is for all of us who admired Katherine Boo's great series in *The Washington Post* about the mistreatment of the mentally retarded by District government contractors: One of the guilty contractors has been sentenced to seven years in prison for cheating the government out of $1.6 million. The contractor, Denise Braxtonbrown-Smith, had submitted what the *Post* describes as "phony claims for therapeutic services, including daily psychotherapy and other treatment that never was provided." Guilty contractors usually escape punishment, so this case, like Judge Kaye's ruling, is a refreshing departure from the customary practice.

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THE REPUBLICANS WHO HAVE made such a dedicated effort to make the rich richer by repealing the estate tax and reducing the income tax might better concentrate on making average workers richer by reducing the payroll tax on them. "The payroll tax ends up taking a bigger chunk out of most people's

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pockets," Joel B. Slemrod, director of the Office of Tax Policy Research at the University of Michigan Business School, recently explained to *The Wall Street Journal*. It is close to criminal to rave and rant about tax relief as Republicans love to do without talking about the very place it is needed most. An easy way to finance a payroll tax reduction for the average worker is to have the tax apply to salary income above $76,200 which it currently does not.

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"YES, MINISTER" HAS LONG BEEN a delight to those of us who have worked in the federal bureaucracy. (Reruns of the British television series still appear on one local channel.) Its leading character, brilliantly played by Nigel Hawthorne, is the ultimate clever bureaucrat, with skills perfectly honed to the thwarting of any reform that might not be in the interest of the civil service. This skill was recently displayed by American bureaucrats in the Boston social security office. Ordered to reduce the number of managers by Al Gore's reinventers, they simply redefined jobs so that 1,200 supervisors are now called "management support specialists." One of the specialists told Jeanne Cummings and Glenn Burkins of *The Wall Street Journal*, "Our jobs are very similar to what we did before." The *Journal* reporters note that the specialist "continues to attend the Thursday morning management staff meeting and has even kept her space in the managers-only parking lot."

The importance of the free or reduced-price parking space in the bureaucrat's scale of values cannot be overestimated. When I realized I had been given one of just four free parking places assigned my agency in the New Executive Office Building, I felt as never before that warm glow of the arrived.

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ANOTHER EXAMPLE OF RESISTANCE to reform is that the government employees' unions are said to be trying to sabotage Comptroller General David Walker's effort to reform personnel rules at the GAO. He asked Congress for authority to conduct staff reductions on the basis of skill and performance as well as seniority. Does the employee have a skill we need? Is he good at it? Not just, how long has he been around? This reform seems so sensible that it should be supported by the unions and adopted by the rest of the government.

If you don't care about bureaucratic reform, shame on you. If bureaucrats aren't good, you have planes crashing, secrets stolen, bad drugs approved—a lot of consequences you really don't want to happen. If you care, we just might get a better government that won't make these mistakes.

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HAS THE MEDIA TILTED FOR Bush? Yes, says a study by the Center for Media and Public Affairs reported by The Associated Press. During 1999, comments on the network news about Bush were favorable 77 percent of the time compared with 49 percent for Gore. This year the trend, though less dramatic, has continued. This reminds me of the 1968 campaign when reporters tilted against Hubert Humphrey until October when it was too late to reverse the trend toward Nixon that they had helped inspire.

Gore is also being hurt by some media good guys who are flirting with Ralph Nader. Nader is a great man. But in my opinion, a vote for him is wasted.

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DOES THE INTERNET HAVE AN Achilles heel? Our contributing editor James Fallows thinks it might. "Maybe the whole digital economy will be laid low by an unreliable electric power system," he wrote in the July 31 issue of *The Industry Standard*. Soon afterwards, on August 3, an article about the electric power shortage in California made the front page of the *The New York Times*.

The danger isn't just in California. Secretary of Energy Bill Richardson says there is also a threat of power shortages "in the Upper Midwest, in the Southwest, and parts of the Northeast." One reason is a crazy-quilt pattern of deregulation in some states, regulation in others, some states in transition from regulated to deregulated, all of which gives power companies little confidence in expanding capacity. What we need is a federal power policy so that utilities can count on consistent regulatory policy.

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THE MOST ABSURD FORM OF name-dropping is when the name is that of a friend of the celebrity. Here, too, I was guilty. I happened to know two friends of Tennessee Williams'—Oliver Evans and Maria Britneva. So I would work into conversation with the possibly impressionable, "He—or she—is a friend of Tennessee's!" I was thus delighted by a recent article by Richard Stengel in *The New York Times* that got this dead on: "Oh look, there's a woman who's Madonna's best friend." This form of name-dropping, while not unknown elsewhere, was and is most common in New York. Another New York custom Stengel has right is that "New Yorkers give their own or others' curricula vitae when they are introduced." I remember the reason for this annoying habit. It was because at the typical New York party, it often seemed that you only had about 30 seconds to impress that beautiful blonde. If you didn't capture her attention, she was sure to turn to that certifiable celebrity or that Greek-god handsome guy you prayed would prove to be an idiot. Another way a New Yorker deals with the 30-second window is to try to convince the girl that he is hip by flashing his taste badges, as I did so disastrously with Rilke and Miró.

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Too Little Time

How broadcasters betray the public interest they're supposed to serve

By Paul Taylor

By all appearances, the $1,000-a-head fundraiser for Rep. Rick Lazio (R-NY) at Manhattan's swank Le Cirque 2000 restaurant this summer was the sort of straight-up, money-for-influence transaction that has become the signature campaign event of our times.

But this one had a twist. The 125 donors were all from the broadcast industry, a special-interest group that finds itself in the rare and enviable position of not having to wait until after the election to draw a return on its political capital. In fact, the checks they cast upon Lazio that night have already returned manyfold, as the candidate spends millions and millions of dollars to buy television ads in his quest to become the next senator from New York.

The swift round-trip journey of those campaign contributions is a tidy metaphor for the most profitable, exclusive, and mutually beneficial relationship in the new Gilded Age of politics—the one between incumbent broadcasters and incumbent politicians. The outlines of this relationship are familiar to all who follow politics and public policy. Politicians give commercial broadcasters the public airwaves for free. During the campaign season, broadcasters turn around and sell air-time back to the politicians, while imposing a virtual news blackout on candidate discussion of issues. This arrangement appears lopsided, but only on first glance. By creating a pay-to-play model for political speech on the nation's premier medium for political communication, the television industry protects incumbents, starves challengers, and enriches itself.

What's less well-known—because the phenomenon is new—is just how much broadcasters have come to profit from democracy. In election years, political campaigns are now the third-best advertising client for the typical network-affiliated local television stations, trailing only automobiles and retail stores. As recently as 1992, political ads accounted for just 3.8 percent of the annual ad revenue of the typical local station, according to an analysis of the industry by Bear, Stearns and Co. This year, that figure is projected to rise to 9.2 percent. There will be more political ads on television this year than ads for fast food or movies.

"We're salivating," Patrick Paolini, general sales manager of WIVB-TV, the CBS affiliate in Buffalo, told the trade publication *Electronic Media* last year when he was asked about the prospect of a Senate race involving First Lady Hillary Clinton. "No question it will be huge as far as ad revenue."

His counterpart, Dan O'Connor of WSYT-TV, a Fox affiliate in Syracuse, recalled that in 1998, when Gov. George Pataki and then Sen. Al D'Amato both ran for re-election, political ads accounted for 20 percent of his station's fourth-quarter revenues. "People [ad-buyers for the candidates] call you up and say, 'Can you clear $40,000 next week?' It's like, 'What? Am I dreaming? Of course, I can clear that!' And they send you a check in the overnight mail. It's like Santa Claus came. It's a beautiful thing."

Business is Booming

Owning one of this country's 1,300 commercial broadcast television stations has always been a bit like owning a money machine. Annual pre-tax profit margins at well-run stations reach 30, 40, even 50 percent. Bottom lines have stayed parked at these stratospheric levels despite a steady loss of viewers, first to cable and more recently to the Internet.

The record seems to defy economic gravity, but it conforms to the winner-takes-more logic of modern markets. In a world where audiences keep getting sliced thinner, the medium that attracts the most viewers keeps getting more valuable, even as it loses eyeballs. Certain kinds of advertisers—candidates among them—simply have no choice but to reach for the biggest megaphone in town. That's still broadcast television. And the broadcasters know it: television ad rates have risen at roughly twice the rate

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of inflation over the past two decades, even as audience shares have dwindled.

The Television Bureau of Advertising estimates that nation-wide, political ads will bring in at least $600 million to local stations this year, a six-fold increase (in real, inflation-adjusted dollars) over what stations received from political campaigns in 1972. Eye-popping as this growth has been, it still doesn't measure the full economic impact of political ads. It misses the price-gouging which some broadcasters inflict on political and non-political advertisers alike during the heavy campaign season.

This summer, Jonathan Lichter, an executive with the Chicago-based ad buying firm of Kelly, Scott & Madison Inc., sent a white paper to his non-political clients to warn them that, with Illinois expected to be a swing state in the presidential campaign, the torrent of political ads could lead to spot-ad price hikes of up to 50 percent in September and October. In theory, political candidates are protected against these spikes by a three-decade-old Federal Communications Commission regulation known as "lowest-unit rate." It requires stations to sell ad time to candidates at the same rate they sell it to their high-volume, year-round commercial advertisers. But the rule works better in theory than in practice. Candidates are an unusual breed of advertiser. In order to ensure that their ads reach the right audience at the right time, they need to buy what's known as non-preemptable time. It's the most expensive time on every station's rate card. These purchases don't take advantage of the lowest-unit-rate rule; they're in a different category from the up-front, high-volume purchases of preemptable time that most product advertisers make. When the campaign season rolls around, the up-front time buyers are protected, but anyone stuck needing to buy on-the-spot market time can get hammered. Louis Schultz, chief execu-

The Washington Monthly

Journalism Award

JUNE & JULY 2000

KEVIN CORCORAN AND JOE FAHY

"Painful Lessons"

The Indianapolis Star, 6/18-6/19, 2000

In an investigative report that led the Governor of Indiana to demote or accept the resignations of three top human services officials, the Indianapolis Star *uncovered gross government negligence in the transfer of mentally disabled residents. The six-month investigation revealed that the move from private institutions to community homes unfolded with too little time, money, and state oversight which led to the deaths of nine out of the 108 patients transferred.*

STEVE MILLS, KEN ARMSTRONG, AND DOUGLAS HOLT

"State of Execution: The Death Penalty in Texas"

Chicago Tribune, 6/11 & 6/12, 2000

Mills, Armstrong, and Holt examined the cases of 131 people put to death in Texas during George W. Bush's tenure as governor, and found major problems similar to those that led Illinois to declare a moratorium on executions. In 40 cases, the defense attorney presented no evidence whatsoever, and in one-third of the cases, a defendant was represented by an attorney who was later disbarred, suspended, or otherwise sanctioned.

SARA MOSLE

"The Vanity of Volunteerism"

The New York Times Magazine, 7/2, 2000

Mosle draws from research and her personal experience as a mentor to students in New York City to examine whether volunteers really make a difference. She discovered that while more Americans volunteer today than at any time in the past decade, the hours they dedicate have declined and their impact is questionable in light of the urgent need for more comprehensive programs of care.

THE MONTHLY JOURNALISM AWARD is presented each month to one or more newspaper, magazine, radio, or television stories (or series of stories) that demonstrate a commitment to the public interest. We are particularly interested in reporting that explains the successes and failures of government agencies at all levels and of other institutions such as the media, corporations, unions, and foundations that contribute to the existence or solution of public problems. Please send nominations (including two copies of the article or broadcast text) to The Washington Monthly Journalism Award, 1611 Connecticut Ave. NW, Washington, DC 20009. Or e-mail us at **editors@washingtonmonthly.com**. Nominations for stories run in August are due September 1, 2000.

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tive officer of the Los Angeles based Initiative Media, said that in the week before the March 7 California primary, he had to spend $25,000 to get a non-political client a 30-second spot on the late local news. Two months earlier, he'd purchased the same spot at the same time on the same station for only $5,000.

"There are only so many spots to sell," said WIVB's Paolini, who has seen similar supply-and-demand dynamics playing out in New York. "With limited inventory and greater demand, other [not political] spots go up in price."

TV Tidal Wave

Actually, there aren't "only so many spots to sell." There are more. During prime time, network-affiliated stations now run an average of nearly 17 minutes of commercials per hour, a 21-percent increase over what they aired in 1991. No, it's not your imagination; there really are more commercials on television.

This growth of clutter, along with the diffusion of the TV audience, the invention of the remote control clicker, and the seen-it-all knowingness of post-modern culture have conspired to make television advertising a far more daunting creative challenge than it used to be. Product advertisers have responded by adopting an edgy tone that tries to engender good feelings about a brand by poking fun at the very act of advertising it. When it works, it's among the best stuff on television. Political consultants haven't and probably shouldn't embrace this self-mocking voice; except in rare cases (Jesse Ventura's, for example) it doesn't suit the product. Instead, they try to overwhelm the problem with volume.

The dirty little secret about political advertising is that the reason there's so much of it is that it keeps getting less effective. A decade ago, consultants told their candidate clients that for a political spot to have an impact, the typical viewer had to see it five times. Now the rule-of-thumb for political ads is a minimum of 10 viewings, or even 15. San Francisco ad man Bob Gardner calls this the "tonnage" approach to advertising. Minnesota ad man Bill Hillsman likens it to "trying to annoy someone into voting for you." Sometimes it works, sometimes it doesn't. But it always drives up the cost of politics. And it always fattens the bottom line of broadcasters. And—given how sterile, synthetic, deceptive, and grating political ads are—it always sends viewers streaming toward the exit door from politics.

That migration, in turn, has led broadcasters to the other half of their pay-to-play model for campaign communication: the blackout of substantive news coverage.

Pay Per View

There was a time when the traditional broadcast networks prided themselves on their role as the unofficial host of a presidential campaign. It was a way to earn their journalistic spurs and show their civic bona fides. Now the only thing they're interested in burnishing is the bottom line. CBS News, the organization that once gave viewers Murrow, Severaid, and Cronkite, this summer gave viewers regular election updates from Pulau Tiga, home of the hit CBS reality show, "Survivor."

As for the real, actual presidential election campaign, well, everybody knows it's a ratings loser. Coverage of this year's presidential race on the three nightly network newscasts is down 40 percent from the coverage in 1988, the last open-seat presidential campaign. Coverage of the major-party political conventions was down 75 percent from what it was in 1980. Of the 22 presidential debates held during the primary season this year, just two aired on network television, neither in prime time. "We've simply for-

Is the Internet or Cable the Solution?

Some recent findings from pollster Andrew Kohut of the The Pew Research Center are instructive. He found in a national survey this summer that just five percent of the public identify the Internet as a primary source of election news. That represents a doubling in the past two years, and the figure will surely double again, and again. But it's still a long way from the 65 percent who identify television as their primary source.

The makeup of that 65 percent is striking: the survey found that 25 percent name cable as a primary source, 24 percent name a local station, and just 17 percent name network television. As recently as 1992, the figure for the networks was 50 percent. Given the fact that on a typical night, the audience for each of the network nightly news programs is still 10 to 20 times greater than the audience for the highest rating cable news or public affairs show (usually Larry King Live), it's astounding that cable in the aggregate has overtaken the networks. Yes, there's been a proliferation of news channels and political chat shows on cable in the past decade, but each of their audiences remains miniscule by broadcast standards. The

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feited the field," lamented veteran ABC newscaster Sam Donaldson earlier this year. The record is even more dismal at local stations. In 1998, the 35 television stations in California's five biggest cities devoted, on average, less than one half of one percent of their news coverage to the state's gubernatorial race during the three months prior to Election Day, despite the fact it was the most important political campaign in the country that year. The candidates had no choice but to pay their way onto the air—which they did, to the record-breaking tune of $100 million.

In New Jersey this spring, Wall Street mogul Jon Corzine set another spending record by plunking down $34 million of his own fortune to win the Democratic Senate primary. CBS's flagship local station, WCBS-TV in New York City, aired a total of 1,195 candidate ads in that race, pocketing $3,398,230 for its trouble. And what of its candidate coverage? Well, a viewer tuning into all of WCBS-TV's afternoon and late evening newscasts during the two weeks leading up to the primary would have seen eight stories about the campaign, featuring a total of one minute and 20 seconds of candidate sound bites. Meantime, within those same two weeks of newscasts, the viewer would have seen 100 candidate commercials.

The broadcasters' justification for downsizing politics to a dreary spectacle of all-ads-all-the-time comes to this: if you want substance, go find it on cable and the Internet. But do we really want to start charging citizens a monthly fee for a front row seat to democracy?

But Congress, in its wisdom, has always understood that there is something special about free, over-the-air broadcasting. Through the decades, it has granted the broadcast industry billions and billions of dollars worth of public subsidies, in the form of free and exclusive use of frequencies on the nation's airwaves. But those subsidies have always come with an obligation. Since the Communications Act of 1934, broadcast licensees have been obliged to serve the "public interest, convenience, and necessity."

By creating a pay-to-play model for political speech, the television industry protects incumbents, and enriches itself.

Free Lunch

Whenever the broadcasters want something more from the government, they wrap themselves in the robes of this public trusteeship. In 1996, broadcasters wanted additional spectrum space to facilitate their transition to digital technology. A few years earlier, the FCC had for the first time begun to auction off chunks of the spectrum to other emerging communication industries; in short order, these auctions brought in more than $20 billion to the public treasury. So when the issue of new spectrum space for digital broadcasting arose, some in Congress argued that it, too, should be sold at auction. Estimates of its value ranged up to $70 billion.

The industry was determined to get the new spectrum for free. It pulled out all the stops, deploying its army of 174 lobbyists (the figure comes from a report from the Center for Public Integrity); cashing in chits accumulated from $9.5 million in campaign contributions over the previous decade; summoning station managers and news directors from around the country to put the arm on their local

larger story these numbers tell is that fewer people are choosing to become politically informed. Kohut found that the number of people following election news this year is down from 1996, despite the fact that by any measure, the 2000 primaries were far more interesting.

Thus, the paradox of the new media: As the sources of political information increase, the number of people seeking it shrivels. It may be that nothing short of a war, recession, environmental disaster, or terrorist outbreak will turn these numbers around. Clearly the new media by itself won't. If anything, it draws people away from the public square by delivering them to their own niches. On television, general news programs used to have certain hours of the evening pretty much to themselves. Now they compete with golf channels, food channels, home shopping channels, weather channels, sports channels, movie channels, wrestling channels, cartoon channels. Over on the Internet, of course, choices become endless. Kohut's poll found that just 15 percent of the public say they actively seek out political information, while 83 percent say they come across it by chance. Given the proliferation of the new narrowcast media, the chances keep getting more remote. Given the abdication of the broadcasters, they could all but disappear. —*PT*

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member of Congress.

They encountered some high-profile opposition. Then Senate Majority Leader Bob Dole called the spectrum giveway "a giant corporate welfare program"; Sen. John McCain called it "unconscionable"; *The Wall Street Journal* called it "the greatest sin of the 1996 Telecommunications Act"; and *New York Times* columnist William Safire called it "a rip-off on a scale vaster than dreamed of by yesteryear's robber barons." But in the end, the broadcast lobby easily prevailed. The issue never even came to a recorded vote in the Senate. Over in the House, when Rep. Barney Frank introduced an auction amendment just to put his colleagues on the record, the only suspense was over how badly it would crash. The answer: 408-16.

As usual, the broadcasters' winning argument was that you can't make us pay. We're unique. We're public trustees.

TV Welfare

Just what the government has been prepared to impose on the industry to meet this ill-defined public-interest obligation has waxed and waned over the years, depending upon the regulatory enthusiasms (or lack thereof) of the era. There used to be a Fairness Doctrine which required that when broadcasters covered a pressing public issue, they had to air all sides of that issue. Broadcasters successfully fought for its repeal on First Amendment grounds. On the other hand, the FCC recently adopted a regulation requiring that television stations air a minimum of three hours a week of educational children's programming.

In the arena of providing electoral information, Congress has never been willing to impose a rule that can be found in nearly every other democracy in the world—a requirement that, during the campaign season, broadcasters provide free air time to candidates.

This is a classic incumbent-protection issue. Members of Congress thrive in a political culture in which they out fundraise challengers three, four, five, 10, or 20 to one. A system of free air time would upset that cozy balance. Over the years, reformers have introduced one free air time bill after another—163 of them, according to a 1997 tally by the Congressional Research Service. They all get buried. The most recent to go down was the 1997 version of the McCain-Feingold campaign finance bill, which included a provision for free air time until the industry worked with its good friend Senate Majority Leader Trent Lott to muscle it out.

The two elected officials in Washington, D.C. who happen to feel most strongly about the value of free air are named Bill Clinton and Al Gore. In his 1998 State of the Union speech, Clinton called on the FCC to take an end run around Congress and impose a free air time regulation on its own. The next day, the newly installed FCC chairman, William Kennard, called a press conference to announce he was going to do just that. It turned out to be a high-water mark. In the ensuing few months, every time Kennard ventured to Capitol Hill to testify, no matter on what subject, one Congressional bull after another warned him to keep his nose out of their business. Even McCain, who supports free time, opposed its imposition by the FCC. By mid-spring, Kennard was under threat of having Congress cut off funding to his commission. Clinton, deeply immersed in the Year of Monica, did not provide political cover. So Kennard backed off.

The best the White House could salvage from the fiasco was the appointment of a blue-ribbon panel to make recommendations about what new public interest obligations the broadcast industry should take on in return for its grant of the new spectrum space. The panel, which was popularly known as the Gore Commission because it reported to the Vice President, was made up of public interest advocates and broadcast industry executives, and co-chaired by Leslie Moonves, the president of CBS. On the subject of candidate time, it came up with an innovative compromise. Each television station was called on to voluntarily air at least five minutes a night of "candidate-centered discourse" in the month preceding every election.

The compromise was "explicitly crafted to allow for ease of industry buy-in," said co-chairman Norman Ornstein of the American Enterprise Institute. But halfway through 2000, industry buy-in has been just north of nil. So far just two dozen of the nation's 1,300 commercial stations have agreed to try to meet the five-minute standard. None of the networks—not even Moonves' CBS—has indicated any willingness to do so. During the month preceding the key Super Tuesday primaries in March, the three traditional broadcast networks provided a nightly average of 36 seconds of candidate-centered discourse. The typical local stations provided 39 seconds.

Meantime, it's been a banner year for fundraising dinners. A banner year for incumbents. A banner year for political ads. And with a good strong election season this fall, there's no reason those profit margins for local broadcasters can't top 50 percent. ●

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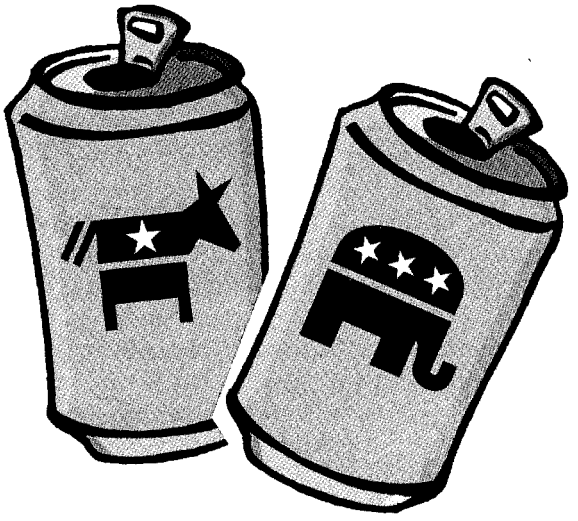
Tidbits & Outrages



Who said the two parties are the same?

Zogby International, a public relations firm, has discovered that Republicans prefer Coke over Pepsi by 45 percent to 33 percent, while Democrats prefer Pepsi by 41 percent to 37 percent.

For people who just hate filling out forms

The State of California's Tourism Assessment Form tells businesses: "Optional Payment: If you wish to voluntarily pay the maximum assessment ... send a payment of $250,000.00 to: California Travel and Tourism Commission."

Collect Them All!

As part of its "Unhappy Meal" campaign, People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals hands out boxes containing butchered cow photos, slaughtered animal toys, and a knife-wielding Ronald McDonald doll.

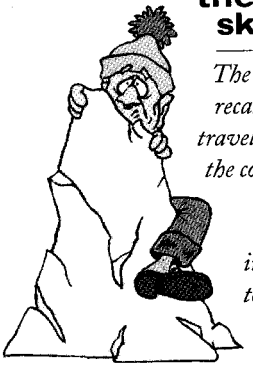
It was supposed to be part of lunch

A Mesaba Airlines flight to Allentown, Pa. made an emergency landing when a scorpion stung one of the passengers.

But Dick Cheney is against it.

George W. Bush has found a gun control measure he supports: tougher penalties on people who fire guns in churches.

You should read their guide to skyscrapers



The Spanish government recalled a state-sponsored travel guide that compared the country's mountains to women because "the desire they provoke is inversely proportional to the number of times you've gotten on top of them."

The winner has yet to receive her prize

The EEOC, which has a backlog of 40,000 cases, gave first-runner-up honors in a national poster contest to a grade schooler whose entry read:

"Fairness is ... waiting your turn."

To you, from you

A St. Louis lawyer pleaded guilty to inflating clients' bills to cover the cost of presents he had given them.

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Monkey See...

How the Bush campaign copies Clinton's

By Paul Begala

THEY OUGHTA BE PAYING US ROYALTIES. For a veteran of the 1992 Clinton-Gore campaign, watching the 2000 edition of George W. Bush is like watching a cheesy cable-movie version of a great novel. The basics are there, but it's a pale imitation of the real thing.

From the moment he secured the nomination, in a ruthless, vicious, amoral butchering of John McCain straight out of the Book of Atwater, George W. Bush has tried to reinvent himself in the image of the man he most despises: Bill Clinton. It must gall Bush to no end; it must tear at his soul and torment his mind to know that his best shot at replacing the man who trounced his father lies in copying the very tactics and techniques of the 1992 Clinton-Gore campaign.

This is not a case of grudging admiration, not at all like the scene in "Patton" in which George C. Scott stands in the desert and shouts at Rommel's tanks, "Rommel, you magnificent bastard, I read your book!" No, while Bush clearly read Clinton's book (or had someone read it to him), he would never call Clinton "magnificent," nor would he acknowledge the debt he owes Clinton. How does he flatter Clinton? Let me count the ways.

Most fundamentally, Clinton's ads and allies ceaselessly proclaimed him to be "a different kind of Democrat" back in 1992. Today, we hear Bush supporters endlessly extolling him as "a different kind of Republican."

Back in 1992, Clinton decried the excessive partisanship in Washington, calling for "an end to the brain-dead politics of both parties in Washington." In June, Bush outlined his governing philosophy (such as it is), saying, "There is too much argument in Washington and not enough discussion. Too much polling and not enough decision-making. Too much needless division, not enough shared accomplishment. Not enough final acts and resolutions, and lasting achievements." Kind of wordy, but it's the same thought.

Clinton never missed a chance to pose with police officers or meet with businessmen—just to prove he was not the old soft-headed kind of Democrat. Bush never misses a chance to take a photo with a minority child, a woman, or a senior citizen—just to prove that he is not the old hard-hearted kind of Republican.

Clinton strolled back to the press section of our campaign plane, endlessly jawing with reporters, charming them, inquiring about their families, and debating arcane aspects of public policy with the wonkier reporters. Bush does the same thing, although he substitutes frat-boy nicknames and cheek-pinching for serious policy discussions.

Perhaps haunted by his efforts to avoid serving in Vietnam, Clinton went out of his way to pay tribute to veterans, both rhetorically and with substantive promises to improve veterans' benefits. George W. is also haunted by reports that he was AWOL from the National Guard for an entire year, while the sons of men who were not powerful politicians were dying in Vietnam. So Bush, who wants to privatize everything from Social Security to Medicare, promises more government benefits to veterans.

Clinton called for "reinventing government"; Bush calls for "getting results from government." Clinton executed Ricky Ray Rector in the middle of the campaign; Bush executes so many Texans they need an electric bench instead of a chair. Clinton called for higher standards, more testing, and greater accountability in our schools; ditto for W.

You half expect Bush to say, "I still believe in a place called Andover."

Bush himself is consumed with contempt for Bill Clinton. The Bush Website features a countdown of the days, hours, minutes—even seconds—left in the Clinton Presidency. (Would it be crass to note the

PAUL BEGALA, *a professor at Georgetown, was previously a political consultant for Bill Clinton.*

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Clinton Presidency will be precisely twice as long as the last Bush Presidency?) So, as you can imagine, the Bush campaign is aghast and dismissive of the notion that they're copying Clinton. "Bill Clinton is not the first candidate to run to the center," says Bush spokesman Ari Fleischer. "There are no patents or copyrights on good ideas. Bill Clinton wasn't the first to run on good ideas targeted to swing voters, and George W. Bush won't be the last."

Besides, stress the Bushies, theirs is a positive campaign (which would come as news to John McCain, the man they painted as pro-breast cancer, mentally unstable, and unpatriotic) while they believe Clinton '92 was negative. "These are two totally different candidates," argues Fleischer. "Bush is running an upbeat, positive campaign, while Clinton ran an essentially negative campaign that convinced people to change and vote out President Bush."

I haven't heard that kind of spin since—well, I hate to say it—I was spinning away for the Clinton '92 campaign. Good Lord, they're like us even in how they deny being like us!

Bush's campaign operation is in many ways a carbon copy of Clinton's. At the center stands Karl Rove, doing his best imitation of James Carville. Communications director Karen Hughes and chief spokesman Fleischer are the GOP's version of Dee Dee Myers and George Stephanopolous. All of them operate out of Austin, not Washington. And none of them can ever be accused of disloyalty. I admire that. I also admire their talent. Together with my old Democratic running buddy, ad man Mark McKinnon (who used to work with Clinton '92 ad guru Mandy Grunwald), they have as good a collection of imagemakers as we've ever seen.

Substance Over Style

But even more striking than the similarities between the campaigns, is this difference: Whereas Clinton had substance aplenty to back up his stylistic breaks with the old Democratic orthodoxy, Bush is shallower than a hoofprint on granite. When you look past the style to the substance of the "Different Kind of Republican/Reformer With Results/Compassionate Conservative/Prosperity With a Purpose" platitudes, there's no *there* there. They oughta hold the convention in Oakland.

Why the utter lack of substance? The Bush campaign—especially W. himself—operates under Atwater's Law. The late Lee Atwater was famous for saying of politics, "It's all bullshit." And back when I was living in Austin, someone who's now a major player in Team Bush told me that the young master embraced that view as well. At the time, I thought it was an overstatement. Surely, I ventured, Bush cared about making sure every young person could read, since he talked about it in every speech. No, this insider said, that's Laura's passion; Bush just repeats it. He thinks it's all bullshit.

And while the Clinton '92 campaign was a longshot crusade, taking on a President who'd been at 91 percent in the polls, Bush 2000 displays the kind of polished cynicism and eager ruthlessness that Atwater would have been proud of. Small wonder. Both W. and Rove were Atwater protégés.

There's a part of me—the part that still wants to like Bush as a guy—that wants him to copy Clinton even more. I want him to look at how Clinton stood up to organized labor on trade, and find the courage to stand up to corporate interests—even on something as easy as raising the minimum wage. I want Bush to look at how Clinton broke with liberals on welfare reform and the death penalty, and summon the guts to take on the NRA. I want Bush to look at how Clinton picked a fight with the Rev. Jesse Jackson over Jackson's offering a podium to Sister Souljah, and find the cojones to pick a fight with Rev. Jerry Falwell or Rev. Pat Robertson.

James Carville, my pal and former partner in the political consulting biz, cites another interesting difference between Clinton '92 and Bush 2000: "They don't put Bush out there," Carville notes. "We put Clinton out everywhere: '60 Minutes' on Super Bowl Sunday. Every shopping mall and town hall meeting, every interview, every debate, everything. They hide Bush. I think they're scared of him. I don't think he's dumb and I don't think he's a bad man, but there's not much to him. I think they're worried someone will ask him about some guy he executed and Bush won't even know the name."

Of course, hiding the candidate also speaks to a lack of substance—as well as a lack of confidence in the candidate. As Clinton's handlers, we knew he was our greatest asset. His intellect, his empathy, his ability to connect and communicate were an overwhelming package. I suspect the Bushies realize that Bush is better as a concept than a reality. He's the best first date in American politics, but he won't wear well in a long-term relationship.

They're right. But the problem is, running for President ain't a one-night stand. It's a long courtship, and before it's through, voters insist on getting to know you in every conceivable setting—both your style and your substance. Which is why the Bush folks would do well to copy Clinton even more.

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Playing With Numbers

How U.S. News *mismeasures higher education and what we can do about it*

BY NICHOLAS THOMPSON

MY FRIEND ROB TOOK AS FEW CLASSes as possible at Stanford. He had top-notch SAT scores and high-school grades, and he was smart enough to graduate even if he was less at ease in the library than party-hopping in a caveman suit. We took one class together and were assigned *Gulliver's Travels*—a book I had read before and loved. Our prestigious professor, however, drained the life out of it by lecturing monotonically about his pet theory that Gulliver's voyage was a metaphor for birth. Good students sat with mouths agape; bad students slept. When we broke into small discussion sections, everyone was so stultified that the understudies running the classes simply rehashed the original monologue. To Rob, it was all "cool"; he was on his way to a degree.

Rob may not have been a stereotypically great student. But he was outstanding from the viewpoint of the *U.S. News and World Report* college rankings, the most important arbiter of status in higher education. He went to a top-rated school, and he didn't hurt its score because the *U.S. News* rankings don't measure how much students learn; they don't measure whether students spend their evenings talking about Jonathan Swift or playing beer pong; and they don't measure whether students, like Rob, are just there to get through.

A single magazine's idiosyncratic ranking system may seem peripheral to the larger issues of higher education, but this particular one matters a lot. The *U.S. News* rankings are read by alumni, administrators, trustees, applicants, and almost everyone interested in higher education. *The New York Times* aptly described them as "a huge annual event," and they dominate what is far and away the best-selling college guide available. Subsequently, the rankings do have a kind of Heisenberg effect, changing the very things they measure and, in certain ways, changing the entire shape of higher education.

The problem isn't that the rankings put schools in the wrong order: a better ranking system might put Stanford 1st; it might put it 35th. I can't presume to know where it, or any other school, would rank. What I do know, however, is that a better ranking system, combined with more substantive reporting, would push Stanford to become an even better school—a place where students like Rob would have to focus more on learning than sliding by, and a place with fewer teachers putting their students to sleep. Unfortunately, the *U.S. News* rankings instead push schools to improve in tangential ways and fuel the increasingly prominent view that colleges are merely places in which to earn credentials.

Rank Behavior

The first *U.S. News* rankings appeared in 1983. The magazine grouped colleges into categories like "national universities" and "regional liberal arts colleges" and sent a survey asking for the opinions of university presidents on the five best schools in their category. There was nothing scientific or subtle about the survey and most people just shrugged it off. Donald Kennedy, president of then-first-ranked Stanford, said, "It's a beauty contest, not a serious analysis of quality."

That issue still sold remarkably well and in 1985 and 1987 *U.S. News*, under new owner Mortimer Zuckerman, again published rankings based solely on university presidents' perceptions. Then in 1988, *U.S. News* decided to take the rankings more seriously and to try to develop a franchise much like *People*'s "50 Most Beautiful People" or the "*Forbes* 400." So Zuckerman placed Mel Elfin, an influential Washington journalist recently lured away from *Newsweek*, in charge of developing a more respectable system. Elfin found his sidekick a year later in Robert Morse, an intelligent, soft-spoken man who, if he were an actor cast as an introverted accountant, would be criticized for overplaying his role. The team got to work: Morse crunching the numbers, Elfin packaging the rankings with stories on higher education and creating the institution christened "America's Best Colleges."

Morse, Elfin, and, later, Managing Editor Alvin Sanoff, rapidly created a franchise: Every September since 1988, the magazine has produced an eagerly anticipated list that precisely orders every college in the country. According to last September's rankings, for example,

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St. Mary's College of California is the eighth best western regional college, just slightly better than Mt. St. Mary's College, California, but well ahead of Our Lady of the Lake University in Texas—a school ranked down in the second of three tiers that the magazine groups institutions into once the top 50 schools in a category have been nailed down. "America's Best Colleges" sells about 40 percent more than *U.S. News*' standard weekly issues and the magazine also produces a hot-selling accompanying book. Last year, eight million people visited *U.S. News*' Website when it posted the rankings.

The rankings are opaque enough that no one outside the magazine can figure out exactly how they work, yet clear enough to imply legitimacy. For the past 12 years the main ranking categories have remained fairly constant: student selectivity, academic reputation in the eyes of other university presidents and admissions deans, student retention and graduation rates, faculty quality rated by pay and PhDs, financial resources, and alumni giving. A category introduced in 1996 measures a university's "value added," assessed by the difference between actual and expected graduation rates (if you let in highly qualified students, your expected graduation rate is high). In short, the perfect school is rich, hard to get into, harder to flunk out of, and has an impressive name.

Beyond the rough guidelines, each category is then broken up further. Under the rules of the 2000 survey, "student selectivity" is based on some unexplained combination of the SAT scores of the 25th and 75th percentile of the entering freshman class, their class ranks, the percentage of applicants accepted, and "yield," the percentage of admitted applicants who enroll. These numbers are hard to parse, but it's difficult to accuse *U.S. News*' ranking system of being a simple beauty contest; it's now a complicated beauty contest and its scientific air contributes greatly to the attention people pay it. As Groucho Marx said: "Integrity is everything. If you can fake integrity, you've got it made."

Morse Code

Of course, there is no one definitive way to judge colleges and *U.S. News* does consistently encourage students to take the rankings with salt. Caltech, for example, was a surprise 1999 choice as the top-rated national university, but even its name suggests that it caters to technophiles, not poets, marines, or aspiring history professors. It also didn't seem like a great place to the seven African-Americans accepted last year: none of them chose to attend. *U.S. News* understands this and sprinkles lines throughout the issue warning students of the importance of "researching the intangibles." But it also understands that, in a status-conscious era, rankings sell.

So, the magazine trudges forward, annually tweaking its algorithm. Last year, for example, criticism from rural schools persuaded the magazine to include a cost-of-living adjustment in the calculation of faculty salaries so as not to make the faculty seem cut-rate at schools where groceries and apartments cost less. This and other small changes have made the rankings better and the editors have often been praised for their willingness to listen to criticism from universities, even as they are criticized for closing decisions about the rankings off from the rest of the *U.S. News* staff and creating a private fiefdom isolated from the rest of the magazine. According

U.S. News Internal Analysis: Methodology found to "lack any defensible empirical or theoretical basis."

In 1997, *U.S. News* commissioned the National Opinion Research Council to write a critique of its ranking methodology. This internal document is probably the most detailed examination of the *U.S. News* rankings that has been done.

NORC's first major critique was that there is little justification for the precise weighting scheme that *U.S. News* uses: "The principal weakness of the current approach is that the weights used to combine various measures into an overall rating lack any defensible empirical or theoretical basis."

The report's second critique was that *U.S. News* had not done exemplary statistical work and had not determined, for example, how individual variables are correlated. "Apart from the weights, however, we were disturbed by how little was known about the statistical properties of the measures or how knowledge of these properties might be used in creating the measures."

The report also made specific criticisms of the way that *U.S. News* interpreted graduation rates, yield, and alumni giving and suggested that the rankings should be tabulated as three-year averages: "to smooth out short-term fluctuations, random errors in reporting, or other factors that might cause unbelievably large movements in rankings for particular institutions."

The report also recommended that *U.S. News* focus more on education: "There are two areas where some sort of measure should be added. These areas are student experience and curriculum."

What happened to the report? Robert Morse wouldn't tell me. "We've moved buildings. It may just be that no one kept it." —*NT*

The complete report is available at http://www.washingtonmonthly.com

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to one former senior reporter who worked on the rankings in the early '90s: "We were roped around the neck to get us to write the serious journalistic stories in the issue, but none of us had a clue how the rankings worked." According to another former staff writer who contributed to the "Best Colleges" issue: "The rankings are completely ridiculous. But they totally pay your salary."

But further from home, the rankings are taken much more seriously. According to research done by James Monk and Ronald Ehrenberg for the National Bureau of Economic Research, a one-place change in a school's ranking one year increases the university's admittance rate by 0.4 percent. In other words, if a school that needs to admit 15 percent of its applicants to fill its class moves from 5th place to 10th place, they will need to admit 17 percent the next year. Monk and Ehrenberg also found that the rankings have a statistically significant impact on both yield and SAT scores of incoming freshmen. Furthermore, foundations and bond-rating organizations like Moody's use the rankings when evaluating institutions.

Ranking placement also has a demonstrably larger impact on institutions outside the highest grouping. Schools in the top subset may bounce around by a couple of places at most each year but they tend to have all the applicants they can handle anyway. Down lower, one tiny change in a school's data or in *U.S. News*' method-

Who's Who

By Susan Threadgill

Just after *CNN*'s cameras had caught **Nancy Reagan**'s obviously deeply touched response to a film tribute to her husband at the GOP convention, **Larry King** turned to one of the people in his booth and asked for a comment. There were two problems: first, the person he turned to was **Donald Regan**, **Ronald Reagan**'s former chief of staff who had devoted a large part of his White House memoir to attacking Nancy. Second, King called him "**Michael**."

Lynne Cheney is the co-author of a Washington novel called *The Body Politic*. In it the vice president dies of a heart attack that occurs while he is making love. Guess who succeeds him as his party's candidate for the vice presidency? His wife.

Should **Dick** be worried?

This reminds an old-timer we know of the time **Charles Percy**, after his daughter's murder, won a surprise victory in his first senate race. **Dick Nixon** was beginning his campaign for the 1968 Republican nomination and the sick joke around town was "**Tricia** and **Julie** are locking their doors every night."

This contribution to our How Things Have Changed Department comes from an article quoting **Richard Berke**, the national political correspondent of *The New York Times*, in the May issue of *Lambda Report*:

"This is a newspaper where not so long ago—when I started there 15 years ago—they were keeping lists—the department heads were asking for lists of the gay reporters in different sections so they could be punished in different ways ... Now it's like, there are times when you look at the front-page meeting and ... literally three-quarters of the people deciding what's on the front page are not-so-closeted homosexuals."

Good for the *Times*!

Speaking of **Nixon**, his former White House aide **Leonard Garment** says in a new book that another Nixon aide, **John Sears**, was **Deep Throat**. And Sears does talk more like Deep Throat than any of the other suspects, but he didn't know nearly as much about Watergate as our candidate **Fred Fielding**, who was **John Dean**'s deputy and one of the great leakers of the modern era, as was our second choice, **David Gergen**, who also happens to have gone to Yale with **Bob Woodward**. Our third choice is **Garment** himself, who was known to detest the **Haldemans** and the **Colsons** and was also a skilled leaker. Our fourth and fifth choices are **Alexander Haig** and **Fred Buzhardt**, who were clearly the main sources for *The Final Days*, Woodward and **Bernstein**'s second book about Watergate. Even if none of our five candidates turns out to be Deep Throat, we would wager that each of them told Woodward and Bernstein more than did John Sears or whoever else Deep Throat turns out to be. When you read *All The President's Men* closely, the actual hard information that Deep Throat supplied was not all that much.

What Senate seats do the Democrats have a chance of picking up from the Republicans this fall? We've asked our resident prognosticator, **Aaron Tracy**, and he tells us that Georgia's **Zell Miller** is practically a cinch to keep **Paul Coverdell**'s seat. Otherwise the Democrats have a shot at winning three in Delaware, Missouri, and Michigan where Democrats **Tom Carper**, **Mel Carnahan**, and

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ology, can bump it from the second "tier," where its score is identical to the 51st best school in the country to the third tier where its score is identical to the 176th.

The Heisenberg Effect

Not surprisingly, there is evidence that schools alter policies for the sake of rankings. This isn't automatically bad; most of what *U.S. News* encourages is pretty good. But because *U.S. News* doesn't measure the most important thing on campus—actual learning—it is pushing colleges to prioritize in ways that are not necessarily the best. In a sense, the rankings are like a professor who ignores the content of her student's papers and instead bases her grades only on spelling and punctuation.

Since *U.S. News* began factoring in yield, the percentage of admitted students who choose to attend a given school, the number of colleges with "early decision" programs has shot up. Normally, students apply to college in the early winter of their senior years and then hold their breath until April when the verdicts come back. Under early decision, applicants apply to one school at the beginning of their senior year, promising to attend if admitted in December or January. Thus, if a college accepts half of its class under early decision, as many now do, it is guaranteed a much higher yield rate because all early decision students are required to attend.

Early decision programs have their advantages but

Debbie Ann Stabenow could unseat Republicans **William Roth**, **John Ashcroft**, and **Spencer Abraham**. In Florida, Democrat **Bill Nelson** should take the seat vacated by Republican **Connie Mack**. And the Democrats should also hold on to contested seats in Nebraska where the popular governor **Ben Nelson** should keep **Bob Kerrey**'s place, New Jersey where **John Corzine** should defeat **Bob Franks**, and New York where **Hillary Clinton** will nose out **Rick Lazio**. But the bad news for Democrats is that they could lose the Virginia seat held by **Chuck Robb** to popular former governor, **George Allen**, and in Nevada, where Republican **John Ensign** may beat **Ed Bernstein**.

How Times Have Changed Part II: **Dana Milbank** of *The Washington Post* recently complained about the quality of the cuisine on **Al Gore**'s plane, noting among other deficiencies, that "Air Force II desperately needs a sommelier." It seems that when Milbank asked which wines were available, the steward "pronounce[d] Merlot with a hard 't'." Flog that man!

When we asked our resident old-timer to comment on Milbank's article, he said "Thirty years ago any reporter who knew the difference between red and white was considered a sophisticate."

By the way, if you haven't been able to figure out why the press has tilted so flagrantly in favor of **George W. Bush**, Milbank's article tells you all you need to know. The menu for one Bush press corps dinner: "Striped lobster ravioli with red salmon caviar. Beef Wellington and cheesecake."

In our June issue we gave you **George W. Bush**'s foreign policy advisors. Here is his domestic team: **Allan Hubbard**, **Michael Boskin**, **Martin and Annelise Anderson**, **John Cogan**, **Christopher DeMuth**, **Martin Feldstein**, **R. Glenn Hubbard**, **Edward Lazear**, **Lawrence Lindsey**, **Diane Ravitch**, **Deborah Steelman**, and **John Taylor**. Among the competing conservative think tanks, the Hoover Institution supplied five of the above and AEI two. With the foreign affairs side it was a 2-2 tie.

Hillary Clinton was not known for her humor in Washington, but on the campaign trail in New York she seems to have loosened up. When asked about her failure to tip that upstate waitress earlier in the campaign, she says she's learned that "15 to 20 percent doesn't mean 15 to 20 percent of the time."

Those who contend that **W.**'s bulb is a trifle low on wattage must have derived some pleasure from the three priorities listed on his new Website, www.georgewbush.com in July. Number 1 was "Reforming social security." Number 2 was "Lowering personal income tax." Third, and last, was "Putting education first."

How Things Have Changed Part III: Congratulations to **Al Gore** for choosing **Joseph Lieberman** as his running mate—the first Jewish vice presidential candidate in history—and to **David Brooks** who so persuasively made the case for Lieberman in our June issue ("ISO VP ASAP.") Does this mean that Gore/Lieberman can count on Brooks' support in the pages of *The Weekly Standard*?

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they also make it much more difficult for students to compare financial aid offerings, and thus give an advantage to students who don't need to worry about financial aid. In addition, early decision has essentially pushed the application cycle forward a year. In 1980, 19 percent of all the students enrolled in the Princeton Review's SAT training course entered before January 1st of their junior year. By this year, that number had climbed to 52 percent. Yield only makes up a small percentage of an overall *U.S. News* score and there were a number of factors pushing the fad among elite institutions—including the fact that it makes the admissions office's job easier by spreading work out—but the *U.S. News* rankings were nevertheless, as confirmed by multiple university officials, a significant factor.

The introduction of *U.S. News'* category of "percentage of alumni who give" also significantly affected fundraising. When I was at Stanford, student groups were paid $25 an hour to solicit donations from alumni and, on the one shift I worked, were specifically told to mention that any donation would increase our ranking. Professor Ronald Ehrenberg of Cornell University described his university's two-tiered approach to improve its score in this category: increase the number of alumni who give and decrease the number of living alumni. The first goal was achieved by increasing the number of contributing alumni by aggressively pursuing small donations. The second goal was achieved by removing the names from the database of people who attended Cornell at one point but are unlikely to donate (for example, people who left the school before earning degrees). At one West Coast college, I was told, alumni who have not given money in five years have been reclassified as dead.

Administrators will deny until their ears start smoking that rankings influence their actions. And in fact few administrators actually sit down with the book and decide that they are going to change specific policies. What happens is that the rankings grease the skids for changes in specific directions, and decisions are gradually made that move the school those ways. A good example comes from Wesleyan University where Vice President for University Relations Barbara-Jan Wilson described to me a successful campaign to increase the number of teachers hired. When she went to the trustees, she argued, in part, that an increase would, "be a good thing in the national media," which, she said, meant *U.S. News.*

The rankings are one of the main ways that alumni and trustees keep track of their school's progress and they are an indicator of the status society attaches to their degrees. Would the trustees have accepted Wilson's proposal if the rankings didn't exist? It's hard to know. What is clear however is that the schools seem to take the rankings so seriously that it would be surprising if they weren't having a large effect.

At Whitman College, for example, the president's fax cover sheets proclaim that the university is "the only Northwest college in *U.S. News'* top tier among national liberal arts colleges." *The Monthly* recently received a letter from Connecticut College beginning "[We] would very much like to establish a recruiting relationship with your organization. We are ranked among the top 25 national liberal arts colleges by *U.S. News and World Report.*" It is indeed ranked exactly 25th, tied with four other schools.

How *U.S. News* Ranks

Academic Reputation (25%)	25
Retention (20%)	
Six-Year Graduation Rate	16
Freshman Retention Rate	4
Faculty Resources (20%)	
Average Class Size	8
Faculty Salaries	7
Faculty Degrees (% Ph.D.)	3
Percent Faculty Full Time	1
Student:Faculty Ratio	1
Student Selectivity (15%)	
Test Scores	6
High School Standing	5 1/4
Acceptance Rate	2 1/4
Yield Rate	1 1/2
Financial Resources (10%)	
Educational Expenditures	10
Alumni Giving Rate	
[Effort to measure alumni satisfaction]	5
Value Added	
Predicted versus Actual Graduation Rate	5

The Meritocracy

There's a certain irony to the way that universities trip over themselves to improve their rankings. Not only are many of the best minds at colleges across the country preoccupied with what is essentially a silly enterprise, the books were cooked to begin with. Since the beginning, *U.S. News* has operated a system with the top schools pre-selected and the rest jumbled behind.

When Elfin was first charged with creating a ranking system, he seems to have known that the only believable methodology would be one that confirmed the prejudices of the meritocracy: The schools that the most prestigious journalists and their friends had gone to would have to be the highest ranking. The first time that the staff had drafted a numerical ranking system to test internally—a formula that, most controversially, awarded points for diversity—a college that Elfin cannot even remember the name of came out on top. He told me: "When you're picking the most valuable player in baseball and a utility player hitting .220 comes up as the MVP, it's not right."

Elfin subsequently removed the first statistician who

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had created the algorithm and brought in Morse, a statistician with very limited educational reporting experience. Morse rewrote the algorithm and ran it through the computers. Yale came out on top, and Elfin accepted this more appealing formula. At the time, there was internal debate about whether the methodology was as good as it could be. According to Lucia Solorzano, who helped create the original *U.S. News* rankings in 1983, worked on the guide until 1988, and now edits *Barron's Best Buys in College Education*, "It's a college guide and the minute you start to have people in charge of it who have little understanding of education, you're asking for trouble."

To Elfin, however, who has a Harvard master's diploma on his wall, there's a kind of circular logic to it all: The schools that the conventional wisdom of the meritocracy regards as the best, are in fact the best—as confirmed by the methodology, itself conclusively ratified by the presence of the most prestigious schools at the top of the list. In 1997, he told *The New York Times*: "We've produced a list that puts Harvard, Yale and Princeton, in whatever order, at the top. This is a nutty list? Something we pulled out of the sky?"

It's the equivalent of giving every woman a rating of 1 to 10 and saying we don't have to date. Just marry the woman with the best score.

We're Number One

The walls around the system that confirmed the top Ivies began to crack in 1996 when Zuckerman hired James Fallows (a contributing editor of *The Washington Monthly*) to edit the magazine. Fallows hired former *New Yorker* writer Lincoln Caplan and, when Elfin left in January of '97, Fallows put Caplan in charge of special projects at the magazine, which included the annual development of the rankings. The two began to make a series of changes that improved the rankings, most noticeably by eliminating one decimal place in the scoring (schools now get grades like 77 instead of 76.8) to create more ties and reduce a spurious air of precision. Caplan also hired a statistical expert named Amy Graham to direct the magazine's data gathering and analysis. Although both Caplan and Graham have left the magazine, and both declined to be interviewed, sources within *U.S. News* claim that, after looking deeply into the methodology of the rankings, Graham found that *U.S. News* had essentially put its thumb on the scale to make sure that Harvard, Yale, and Princeton continued to come out on top, as they did every year until 1999 after Elfin selected a formula.

This was done in large part by rejecting a common statistical technique known as standardization and employing an obscure weighting technique in the national universities category. Consider the data from the 1997 book, the last year the numbers for overall expenditures were posted publicly. Caltech spent the most of any college at $74,000 per student per year, Yale spent the fourth-most at $45,000 and Harvard spent the seventh-most at $43,000. According to the *U.S. News* formula applied in every single category except for national universities, the absolute rates of spending would be compared and Caltech would be credited with a huge 40-percent category advantage over Yale. Under the formula used solely in this category the difference between Caltech and Yale (first place and fourth place) was counted as essentially the same as the difference between Yale and Harvard (fourth place and seventh place) even with the vast difference in absolute spending.

According to sources close to the magazine, a bitter internal struggle broke out when it became clear that Caltech was going to come out on top in the late spring of 1999 after the rankings had been changed to count every category the same way. Fallows' replacement Stephen Smith and new Special Projects Editor Peter Cary were both reportedly shocked to see that, under the new formula Graham had recommended, the conventional wisdom of the meritocracy would be turned upside down, and there were discussions about whether the rankings should be revised to change the startling results. (Morse and Cary both deny this.) Eventually, a decision was made to keep the new formula and *U.S. News* received a hefty dose of criticism from baffled readers.

Morse declined to say how the formula has been changed for the rankings that will be printed on September 4th of this year. But if Caltech's ranking drops and one of the three Ivies recovers its crown, read the small print carefully. Caltech's advantage over the second ranked school last year was an astronomical seven points (more than the difference between #2 and #8). The methodology would have to be monkeyed with substantially to drop Caltech out of the top spot.

Learning

There are good things about the *U.S. News* rankings: They help high school students without college coun-

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selors figure out ballpark quality estimates of the schools they're considering; and they have standardized the information that universities do make public. As Harrison Rainie, a long-time *U.S. News* editor who worked briefly as special projects editor after Caplan and before Cary says, "they helped create a common vocabulary. They made colleges count the number of part-time and full-time students the same way. They got colleges to define graduation rates the same way. ... Colleges were using whatever numbers that they could justify under whatever definitions they felt like choosing."

The rankings should also be given credit for intending to serve a worthy purpose. Over the past decades, colleges have become vastly more expensive and vastly more important to the American workforce. But they have not become commensurately more transparent. Colleges are reluctant to release information—like financial data or independent reports on teacher quality and student satisfaction—that could be useful to potential students and the public. Part of this reticence comes from a genuine belief that higher education functions best when left alone; part of it comes from an effort to use the ivory tower as an excuse to obscure information that might be viewed critically. *U.S. News* wanted to open some of the windows that colleges close and let students see in.

But to make the *U.S. News* rankings into something with a salutary effect overall—the kind of rankings that encourage good behavior by universities and truly help applicants—there need to be systemic changes. Specifically, the magazine needs to make a concerted effort to measure actual education. But *U.S. News* has never been able to change their system for two main reasons. First, with every change it makes, the magazine gets hammered by people who charge it with simply trying to generate interest each year by making schools bounce around. Secondly, when *U.S. News* changes its methodology it implicitly admits that its previous systems were inferior; if the ranking methodology is better this year, it must have been worse last year. A major change would throw fifteen years' work into question.

The second reason was particularly acute when Mel Elfin, who had an almost paternal devotion to the rankings, held the reins. Elfin was Washington bureau chief of *Newsweek* for almost 20 years; he's been to China with Nixon; he has pictures of himself sitting with every president from Johnson to Reagan on his wall. But when I asked him whether, looking back, the rankings were his greatest accomplishment, he repeated twice: "This is what's going to last." He wasn't the kind of guy who was going to let the project into which he invested so much be turned upside down.

In some ways, Morse and Elfin treated critics of the rankings as enemies of the faith. When Reed College refused on principle to submit data in 1995, *U.S. News* summarily dropped it to the lowest tier; despite having the 18th best academic reputation of all national liberal arts colleges in *U.S. News*' reputational survey, Reed was listed right next to Richard Stockton College of New Jersey which had the 153rd place. One of the most eloquent critics of the rankings, Stanford President Gerhard Casper, sent a personal letter in 1996 to Fallows, that was eventually made public, saying: "I am extremely skeptical that the quality of a university—any more than the quality of a magazine—can be measured statistically. However, even if it can, the producers of the *U.S. News* rankings remain far from discovering the method." Elfin wasn't CC'd and the criticism and its form did not please him. Casper announced his retirement this year and when I met Elfin for our interview, he almost immediately told me that: "Casper's gone and that's changed things." At the most recent meeting of the National Association of College Admissions Counselors, Stanford Associate Admissions Director Jonathan Reider asked Morse a critical question about the rankings. Morse interrupted him with a caustic: "Your president's just quit."

Measuring Mr. Chips

When I asked Morse and Cary why they didn't include more measures of actual education, they gave me four reasons: colleges don't make the data available, it would be too expensive to gather, much of it simply can not be quantified, and, as Cary told me, "if we were to tread into it ... we'd get into a dozen, scores of questions." The last two concerns are valid, but also, in a sense, refute the whole enterprise. If the rankings are subjective and leave things out, *U.S. News* should say so. If, as Cary said to me, the rankings can't "be everything to everybody," the magazine should give schools much less precise rankings, or not even rank at all: Just publish the data without running it through the algorithm that produces the ordinal rankings. At the least, it should point out right in the middle of the table that it's left out extremely important data.

U.S. News also doesn't have a terribly strong excuse in the contention that colleges give out little data: every college studies student satisfaction and teacher quality, so the data's out there. And, as Harrison Rainie pointed out, one of the virtues of *U.S. News* is that it has been able to convince colleges to standardize data and make it public in other categories.

Expense is the best of the four arguments, and the previously noted NORC report did caution that the authors could not think of a financially reasonable way to gather the necessary data. But Robert Zemsky at the

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University of Pennsylvania's Institute for Research on Higher Education has recently completed a survey of students six years after their graduations from 80 schools, compiling data on everything from general employment information, to whether respondents voted in the last election cycle, to complicated scenario-based questions that gauge confidence in certain job tasks and skills. How did Zemsky get his data? In large part because colleges were so eager to find reliable data on graduates that they helped fund the surveys. Another complementary research project comes from the National Survey of Student Engagement an organization working to survey undergraduates to find out which colleges use "good practices." Students are asked, for example, how often they talk to professors outside of class, how much time they spend doing homework, and whether or not they would attend the same institution again. *U.S. News* could tap into either data set or it could develop its own.

Virtual Reality

Of course, even with all of Zemsky's research and NSEE's survey data included, rankings inevitably fall short: Numerical lists are a fundamentally flawed way to measure the quality of a college, an argument that university presidents, usually when their schools drop in the ratings, have been making for years. As John Katzman, president of the Princeton Review says, "It's the equivalent of simply giving every woman a rating of 1-10 and saying we don't have to date. Just marry the one with the best score." It's hard enough to quantify the quality of one person's education, much less the quality of an entire college. There's too much complexity, subtlety, and individuality to justify more than a rough score.

This isn't to say that *U.S. News* should abandon its system. The good should be the enemy of the pretty bad (which is why *U.S. News* should improve) but the perfect shouldn't be the enemy of the good. But it is to say that journalists should therefore work toward two goals: turning over the rocks that *U.S. News* leaves untouched and disabusing people of the notion that these rankings should play such a prominent role in higher education.

The data that *U.S. News* glides by isn't the sort that comes easily; it's buried deep. Do the the big shot professors actually teach? How many hours? Are they good teachers? Are there unknown professors who are better teachers? Or is it the graduate students who teach? What is the intellectual atmosphere like on campus? How frequently do students stay up arguing about Faulkner, aid to Ghana, or whether a wheel chair can be built that goes up and down stairs? What about the campus support and counseling system for students who begin to flail? Some journalists do a good job searching for answers to these questions, and there are guides, like the Princeton Review's, that take a stab at sorting through them for hundreds of colleges. But the overall trend that *U.S. News* feeds into has been to treat universities as though they are in the business of conferring degrees—personnel offices for the rest of America—and less as intellectual environments where students really learn.

In fairness to journalists, of course, these are not questions that are easily answered and there's good reason for that. Universities often don't want students to know. They don't want to make it easy for reporters to look into issues of teacher quality or the intellectual atmosphere on campus because what they'd find wouldn't be pretty and they know that reporters would find a few too many students like Rob, and a few too many professors like mine on *Gulliver's Travels*. As the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching wrote in a blistering report on research universities in 1998: some professors "are likely to be badly trained or even untrained teaching assistants who are groping their way toward a teaching technique; some others may be tenured drones who deliver set lectures from yellowed notes, making no effort to engage the bored minds of the students in front of them."

As for disabusing readers of the notion that rankings should have a central function in educational evaluation, there's a very good example of the kind of journalism needed that comes straight from the magazine itself: *U.S. News*' very own 1999 guide to "Outstanding High Schools." This 40 page report investigated high schools in six major metropolitan areas and evaluated them through a series of quantitative measures based on test scores and dropout rates controlled for family circumstances. Most important, after making their best rough analysis, *U.S. News* simply listed the schools they considered the most outstanding; they didn't rank them. Thus, instead of focusing on the horse-race element, readers focused on the list of traits common among outstanding schools—for example, mentoring programs for new teachers and partnerships with parents. The report focused on extensive profiles of schools that succeeded in each category.

In a sense, the *U.S. News* rankings serve as a test; administrators are teaching to it, and society, including students, puts too much stock in the results. And, as in all levels of education, there's no problem with that—if the test measures the right things as well as possible, if people recognize that no test can measure everything, and if there are well-developed methods for describing what the test leaves out.

Unfortunately, *U.S. News* falls far short of the first goal, and we all fall short of the others.

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What's Hot At APSA

Can the Internet get people to vote?

BY MICHAEL GERBER AND RACHEL MARCUS

THIS AUGUST 30 THROUGH SEPTEMBER 3, many of the nation's top political scientists will converge on Washington for the annual conference of the American Political Science Association. They will present thousands of papers and participate in hundreds of panels on topics from "German Geisteswissenschaft" to military spending. But there is one topic that kept coming up in conversations with professors participating in the conference: Americans don't seem to vote much anymore. In fact, it's virtually certain that no matter who wins in November, neither Al Gore nor George W. Bush will receive the endorsement of a majority of eligible voters, and the winner might not even get 25 percent of the eligible vote. Fewer people voted in 1998 than in any midterm election since 1942, and participation in presidential elections has fallen from 62.8 percent in 1960 to an all-time low of 48.9 percent in 1996.

How can voter interest and participation be increased? Many reformers look to the twenty-first century's panacea to solve this problem: the Internet. Online technology has already proven its value in politics: 95 percent of gubernatorial candidates and 72 percent of Senate candidates from the two major parties ran Websites in 1998. More recently, Sen. John McCain raised more than $5 million over the Internet in his bid for the presidency. And many unions, schools, and businesses have found online voting to be the most efficient and convenient system for casting ballots.

There has also been one closely studied test of Internet voting in an election for national office. In March, when Arizona's Republican legislature set an inconvenient Democratic primary date, the Democrats decided to hold a private, independently-funded one. This gave them an opportunity to try something unprecedented: an election partly conducted over the Internet. While the primary did not produce any surprises—Gore won easily—it provided a chance to study the Internet's effect on voting.

Frederic Solop, a professor of political science at Northern Arizona University who examined Internet voting in Arizona, found that 48 percent of votes were cast online and that total participation more than doubled the turnout for Arizona's 1992 Democratic primary. Solop also found that, contrary to the predictions of some academics, race had no significant effect on public opinion of online elections.

Skeptics of Internet voting suggest that online elections appeal only to people who would vote anyway. Solop thinks his study shows otherwise. "Young voters put more faith in technology than older people," he found in his public opinion study. "[They] are the ones most excited about Internet voting." This does not come as a surprise, but it should make critics of Internet voting think twice. The youngest voters are the most disillusioned with politics and, presently, the least likely to participate; if they are enthusiastic about the Internet, maybe digital elections will reverse that trend.

But will the participation apparently stimulated by the advent of Internet voting be permanent? Will Internet voters still want to vote this November when the novelty of voting online wears off? Maybe yes. If you hook people to vote once, some political scientists argue, they will keep returning to the polls. A study by two Yale University researchers, Alan Gerber and Don Green, confirms the effect: Results from a 1999 municipal election show that participants stimulated to vote for the first time in 1998 had a 50 percent likelihood of voting again the next year. "Voting may be a habitual behavior," says Gerber.

Face to Face

Gerber and Green are now examining data on the behavior of over 25,000 Americans to determine the effects of three different types of appeals to voters: face-to-face interactions, mailings, and telephone drives. "We

MICHAEL GERBER *and* RACHEL MARCUS *are interns at* The Washington Monthly.

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wanted to see whether or not these various stimuli had an effect on voter turnout," explains Gerber. In the study of nonpartisan voter drives, they found that the personal approach had the greatest success, resulting in a 10 percent boost in voter turnout. Mailings had a minimal effect—a turnout increase of only 0.5 percent—and phone calls were completely ineffective.

Candidates should look closely at the results of the experiment. "We have observed over the last several decades a changing character in American political campaigns, a movement away from campaign workers who are personally involved with the electorate ... to broadcast media," says Gerber. Door-to-door campaigns, these results indicate, would be more effective than expensive television ads at recruiting new voters. It is also more economically efficient than the more impersonal modes of communication, according to Green. He and Gerber analyzed different methods of appealing to eligible voters by comparing the amount of money spent to the actual number of people persuaded to vote on election day. While the study indicated a cost of $30 per voter for mailings, the price per voter of a door-to-door campaign is less than half that amount. "It's a puzzle as to why face-to-face campaigning is not used more," says Green. He blames the move away from personal campaigning on consultants. "Campaign consultants can run more campaigns with direct mail and media." For a door-to-door campaign, politicians do not need to consult with high-paid experts. A consultant who recommends door-to-door campaigning would potentially be making himself and his colleagues less essential.

Hot Topics

Which of the thousands of papers to be presented at the APSA conference are likely to be the most interesting? We asked some of the nation's top political scientists for their picks.

Bill Galston

Bill Galston *is a professor at the University of Maryland's School of Public Affairs and the author of* Liberal Purposes: Goods, Virtues, and Diversity in the Liberal State. *His picks are:*

"Party Alignments During the Clinton Era"
JOHN J. COLEMAN, *University of Wisconsin, Madison*

"The Consequences of the Declining Faith in the American Electoral System"
LARRY M. BARTELS, *Princeton University*
WENDY M. RAHN, *University of Minnesota, Minneapolis*

"Digital Democracy Comes of Age in Arizona: Participation and Politics in the First Binding Internet Election"
FREDERIC I. SOLOP, *Northern Arizona University*

"Results from Evaluations of School Choice Programs"
PAUL E. PETERSON, *Harvard University*
WILLIAM G. HOWELL, *Stanford University*
PATRICK J. WOLF, *Georgetown University*

"Ethics and Politics of Organ Transplant Policy"
SABA BRELVI, *Johns Hopkins University*
NNEKA C. EGBUNIWE, *Johns Hopkins University*
BRYN SAKAGAWA, *Johns Hopkins University*

"'Saving' Social Security and Medicare: A Tale of Elite Opinion"
JOSEPH WHITE, *Tulane University*

"Reinventing Government in 2000: Assessing the State of the American States"
JEFFREY L. BRUDNEY, *University of Georgia*
F. TED HEBERT, *University of Utah*
DEIL S. WRIGHT, *University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill*

"The Changing American Mind, 1989-1998"
WILLIAM G. MAYER, *Northeastern University*

"Political Elites and the American People: Who Says What About Whom."
RODERICK P. HART, *University of Texas, Austin*
WILLIAM JENNINGS, *University of Texas, Austin*

Larry Sabato

Larry Sabato *is professor of government and foreign affairs at the University of Virginia, and is the co-author of* Dirty Little Secrets: The Persistence of Corruption In American Politics. *His picks are:*

"Elizabeth Dole for VP? Voters' Gender Gap and Republican Women Candidates"
CRAIG LEONARD BRIANS, *Virginia Tech*

"Are the Sheep Hearing the Shepherd: An Evaluation of Church Member Perceptions of Clergy Political Speech"
PAUL A. DJUPE, *Denison University*
CHRISTOPHER P. GILBERT, *Gustavus Adolphus College*

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"The Politicized White House"
JOHN F. HARRIS, *The Washington Post*

"The Media and Military Intervention"
DAVID L. ROUSSEAU, *University of Pennsylvania*

"Which Senators Receive Media Coverage and Why?"
SEAN M. THERIAULT, *Stanford University*
DAVID W. BRADY, *Stanford University*

"Showcasing the Public: Public Opinion, the Media, and Impeachment"
DIANE J. HEITH, *St. John's University*

"The Effects of Ballot Initiatives on Voter Turnout in the American States"
CAROLINE TOLBERT, *Kent State University*

"Barriers to Turnout After Motor Voter"
RAYMOND E. WOLFINGER, *University of California, Berkeley*
JONATHAN HOFFMAN, *University of California, Berkeley*

"From Experiment to Status Quo: The Adoption of Vote-By-Mail in the State of Oregon"
PRISCILLA L. SOUTHWELL, *University of Oregon*

Michael J. Sandel

Michael J. Sandel *is a professor of government at Harvard University and the author of* Democracy's Discontent: America in Search of a Public Philosophy. *His picks are:*

"Disdaining the Media: The American Public's Changing Attitudes Toward the News"
TIMOTHY E. COOK, *Williams College*
PAUL W. GRONKE, *Duke University*

"Eros and Mortality in Nietzsche and Weber"
TRACY B. STRONG, *University of California, Santa Barbara*

"Globalization and Policy Diffusion: Explaining Two Decades of Liberalization"
BETH A. SIMMONS, *University of California, Berkeley*

"World Income Inequalities, the World Economy, and Globalization"
GIOVANNI ARRIGHI, *Johns Hopkins University*
CASIANO A.W. HACKER-CORDON, *Yale University*

"What Government Can Do About Poverty and Inequality"
BENJAMIN I. PAGE, *Northwestern University*
JAMES SIMMONS, *University of Wisconsin, Oshkosh*

"Race, State, and History: The Politics of Institutional Change in the United States, Great Britain, and France"
ROBERT C. LIEBERMAN, *Columbia University*

"Political Liberalism and the Essential Role of Public Memory"
STEVEN M. DELUE, *Miami University*

"Arbitrating Identity: High Courts and Religious/Secular Conflict in Israel and Egypt"
EVA R. BELLIN, *Harvard University*

"Towards the Economic Stabilization of America's Urban Communities: Policy and Institutional Alternatives in the Global Era"
GAR ALPEROVITZ, *University of Marlyand, College Park*
DAVID IMBROSCIO, *University of Louisville*
THAD WILLIAMSON, *Harvard University*

Theda Skocpol

Theda Skocpol *is a professor of government and sociology at Harvard University and the co-author of* The Missing Middle: Working Families and the Future of American Social Policy. *Her picks are:*

"The Effectiveness of Negative Campaigning in U.S. Senate Elections, 1988-1998"
RICHARD R. LAU, *Rutgers University, New Brunswick*
GERALD M. POMPER, *Rutgers University, New Brunswick*

"Acts of Faith: How Churches Spark Political Activity"
DAVID E. CAMPBELL, *Harvard University*

"Political Generations, Feminist Consciousness and the Consequences for Women's Political Participation"
TERRI SUSAN FINE, *University of Central Florida*

"Why Men Leave: Gender and Party Politics in the 1990s"
ANNA GREENBERG, *Harvard University*

"Why States Get Partitioned: A Conceptual Account"
UDAY MEHTA, *University of Hull*

"Bargaining in Legislatures with Overlapping Generations of Politicians"
ROBERT VAN HOUWELING, *Harvard University*
KENNETH A. SHEPSLE, *Harvard University*

"Big, Slow, ... and Invisible: Macro-Historical Processes and Contemporary Political Science"
PAUL PIERSON, *Harvard University*

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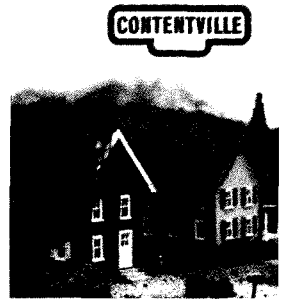

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Tax Free Millionaires

How the super rich get away without paying any taxes

BY DONALD L. BARLETT AND JAMES B. STEELE

TAX FRAUD IS EXPLODING IN THE United States. In ways large and small, Americans are cheating like never before. One of every three people, perhaps as many as one of every two, is doing it. It's one of Washington's dirty little secrets, a ticking time bomb with the potential to destroy the country's tax system and to undermine essential government programs like Social Security. Disguised by a robust economy and record tax collections, fraud is growing at an exponential pace among all groups, with more and more income concealed from the IRS each year.

How bad is it? No one can put a precise number on lost tax revenue. But it's bad, and getting worse. Even the IRS, which doesn't like to acknowledge this problem for fear it will only encourage more taxpayers to cheat, admitted in 1999 that the "tax gap," its euphemism for fraud and error, is now up to $195 billion a year. But that is based on data from the 1980s. A more reasonable count of the revenue lost every year is $300 billion.

If Tax Dodging Inc. were a business, it would be the nation's largest corporation, eclipsing General Motors, which sits atop the Fortune 500 with revenue of $189 billion.

How do people escape paying the taxes they owe? They inflate their itemized deductions for everything from medical bills to charitable contributions. They manufacture deductions to cover expenses never incurred. They understate their income. Or they do both. They ship their money to foreign tax havens. They claim illegal refunds. They speculate in the stock market and don't report their gains. They charge off their personal living costs as business expenses. And many don't even bother to file tax returns at all.

How many nonfilers are there today? The IRS doesn't have a clue. In part, that's because Congress has slashed the agency's budget, halting the kind of audits that would make even crude projections possible. Informally, government tax authorities say there are 10 million nonfilers. In truth, there are many more, and here's why:

The IRS identifies a nonfiler as a person who fails to submit a tax return even though a third party has filed an earnings statement (W-2) or information return reporting interest or dividends (Form 1099) that shows the person received income during the year. This narrow definition ignores all those who leave no paper trail. These are the people for whom there are no W-2s or 1099s, no record of wages, annuities, gambling winnings, pensions, interest, dividends, or money flowing in from foreign trusts and bank accounts.

In addition to these people who deal only in cash, there is another larger group whose numbers have soared. They are wealthy Americans and foreign citizens who live and work in the United States and in other countries—multinational wheeler-dealers, independent businesspeople, entertainers, fashion moguls and models. They have multiple passports or global residences and therefore insist they are exempt from the U.S. income tax.

People like the Wildensteins of New York City. That would be Alec and his former wife Jocelyne, who became a staple of the New York tabloids during an unseemly divorce that raged from the fall of 1997 until the spring of 1999.

Alec, born in 1940, is an heir to his family's cen-

From the book The Great American Tax Dodge *by* DONALD L. BARLETT *and* JAMES B. STEELE. *Copyright © 2000. Reprinted by permission of Little, Brown and Company (Inc.). All rights reserved.*

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tury-old, intensely-private, multibillion-dollar international art business. Jocelyne, four years his junior, is best known for having undergone countless plastic surgery procedures that make her look more feline, permanently, than any member of the cast of *Cats*. Her bizarre appearance inspired the tabloids to dub her "The Bride of Wildenstein."

For the Wildensteins, the once impenetrable curtain that had protected the family from prying eyes for generations was unexpectedly pierced on the night of September 3, 1997, when Jocelyne returned to the couple's opulent Manhattan home after a visit to the family's 66,000-acre ranch in Kenya. Walking into the six-story townhouse on East 64th Street, next door to the Wildenstein gallery, a few minutes after midnight, she found her husband in bed with a nineteen-year-old, long-legged blonde.

Alec hastily wrapped himself in a towel, grabbed a 9mm handgun and pointed it at his wife and her two bodyguards. "I wasn't expecting anyone," he screamed with a touch of understatement. "You're trespassing. You don't belong here." The bodyguards summoned the police, who arrested Alec and charged him with three counts of second-degree menacing.

So it was that the French-born, aristocratic Alec Nathan Wildenstein, having traded his towel for an Armani suit and a monogrammed shirt, spent the night in the Tombs prison with some of New York's low life. If nothing else, the incarceration gave him time to plot his revenge. When he got out the next day, he moved quickly. He canceled his wife's credit cards. He cut off her telephone lines, locked all the rooms in the townhouse except for her bedroom and sitting room, shut off her access to bank accounts, directed the chauffeur to stop driving her around, fired her accountant, and, in one final act of retribution, ordered the household chefs to stop cooking for her, which proved a major inconvenience because she had never learned how to operate the stove.

Jocelyne responded by turning up the temperature a few hundred degrees on what had been one of the quietest divorce proceedings ever among the rich and discreet. As a result, life among the Wildensteins—a family that for more than a century had guarded its privacy with a pathological obsession—went on public display.

Jocelyne demanded a $200,000 monthly living allowance, payment of her personal staff's salary and expenses, and a $50 million security deposit pending distribution of the marital property. Alec pleaded poverty. He insisted he had no money of his own and that the millions they spent came from his father.

The Wildenstein Family Circus that followed established conclusively, one more time, that the rich are very different from the rest of us, beyond the fact that they often pay comparatively little or no taxes. But first, some background on this intriguing family.

Alec is the son of Daniel Wildenstein, the patriarch of the enormously rich French clan. Daniel, born in 1918, controls the Wildenstein billions through a web of secret trusts and intertwined corporations. The Manhattan townhouses, for example, are owned in the name of the Nineteen East Sixty-Fourth Street Corporation, which in turn is controlled by "intermediate entities held in trust." He continues to operate the private, secretive art business started by his grandfather in the nineteenth century, with galleries in New York, Beverly Hills, Tokyo, and Buenos Aires, catering to private collectors, museums, and galleries. And while he spends a lot of his time in Paris, a good chunk of his money resides in secret Swiss bank accounts.

Tucked away in family storerooms, notably in New York, is reportedly the world's largest private collection of the works of the masters—valued at $6 billion to $10 billion. The inventory includes thousands of paintings and drawings by Renoir, Van Gogh, Cezanne, Gauguin, Rembrandt, Rubens, El Greco, Caravaggio, da Vinci, Picasso, Manet, Bonnard, Fragonard, Monet, and others. Many have never been displayed publicly.

In 1990, Daniel's sons Alec and Guy took over management of the New York gallery. Their families maintained separate living quarters in the East 64th Street townhouse. They shared the swimming pool in the basement, the informal and formal dining rooms, the foyer, elevator, and the entrance to the townhouse. Alec and Jocelyne lived on the third floor, their two children had bedrooms on the fifth floor, and Jocelyne used the sixth floor as an office. In addition to the Manhattan townhouse, they maintained a castle, the Chateau Marienthal, outside Paris, an apartment in Switzerland, and the Kenya ranch.

Wherever they happened to be, the Wildensteins pursued a lifestyle that was lavish even by the standards of the rich and famous. The details, as they poured from Jocelyne's lips in the divorce proceeding, told the story of a family of seemingly unlimited wealth and no hesitation about spending it. According to her, she and Alec "routinely wrote checks and made withdrawals" from their Chase Manhattan Bank checking account "for $200,000 to $250,000 a month." Jocelyne said that over the last 20

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years they did "millions of dollars worth of renovations on the Paris castle and Kenya ranch," and she directed the management, hiring, and staffs of those properties. The routine operating costs of the ranch alone ran $150,000 a month.

In New York, Jocelyne's staff payroll at the 64th street townhouse included $48,000 a year for a chambermaid; $48,000 for a maid who tended the dogs; $60,000 each for a butler and chauffeur; $84,000 for a chef; $102,000 for an assistant with an MBA; and $102,000 for a secretary.

In Kenya, their vast Ol Jogi ranch, with its two hundred buildings spread over an area five times the size of Manhattan, required nearly four hundred employees to look after the grounds and the animals.

In France, the resident staff at the chateau, "the largest private home of its type within a fifteen-minute drive of Paris," included five gardeners, three concierges, and three maids.

Talk did not come cheap for the Wildensteins. The annual telephone bill in Manhattan alone sometimes ran as high as $60,000. And then there were all the other necessities, like $547,000 for food and wine; $36,000 for laundry and dry cleaning; $60,000 for flowers; $42,000 for massages, pedicures, manicures, and electrolysis; $82,000 to insure her jewelry and furs, and $60,000 to cover the veterinarian bills, medication, pet food, beds, leashes, and coats for their dogs. As for miscellaneous professional services, $24,000 went for a dermatologist, $12,000 for the dentist, and $36,000 for pharmaceuticals. Her American Express and Visa card bills for one year totaled $494,000.

Some of these bills were paid out of the couple's Chase Manhattan account. Some were paid out of "other bank accounts in New York, Paris, and Switzerland." And some bills, Alec confirmed, were paid from "the Wildenstein & Co." account, "the Wildenstein & Co. Special Account, and family businesses." Sort of like having your employer pick up the cost of your clothing, pets, and vacations.

And then there were Jocelyne's personal expenditures. Over the years, she accumulated jewelry valued at $10 million, including a thirty-carat diamond ring and custom pieces from Cartier. She attended fashion shows in Paris. Her annual spending on clothing and accessories ran to more than $800,000. She once spent $350,000 for a Chanel outfit that she helped to design. All told, according to papers filed in the divorce case, the couple's personal and household expenditures added up to well over $25 million in 1995 and 1996 alone.

With all those tens of millions of dollars flowing out over the years to maintain a lifestyle beyond comprehension to most people—$60,000 in dog bills exceeds the annual income of three-fourths of all working Americans who pay taxes—you might think that Alec and Jocelyne also forked over millions of dollars to the Internal Revenue Service. But you would be wrong.

Alec wrapped himself in a towel and pointed a handgun at his wife: "I wasn't expecting anyone!"

They didn't pay a penny in U.S. income tax.

In fact, they never filed a federal tax return.

These admissions by a family accountant are spelled out in records of the acrimonious divorce and also entered into court opinions. They lived the tax-free life even though, by Jocelyne's account, they resided in the Manhattan townhouse for nineteen years, from shortly after their Las Vegas marriage in 1978 until the rancorous divorce proceedings began in 1997. Their children were born in New York and went to school in New York. Alec conducted the family art business through Wildenstein & Co., Inc., a New York corporation, from the gallery next door. He had a U.S. pilot's license. He sued and was sued in the courts of New York and other states. He signed documents moving millions of dollars between Wildenstein companies, some located in the tax havens of the world. He transacted business in New York and other states. He was vice-president of Nineteen East Sixty-Fourth Street Corporation, which owns the townhouse, gallery, and other properties. His New York pistol license identified him as an officer of Wildenstein & Co. And following his arrest for pointing the weapon at Jocelyne and her bodyguards, he insisted that he should be released on his own recognizance because of his substantial ties to the community.

Nonetheless, he filed no federal tax returns. And no one in Washington or New York noticed. Or cared. Under ordinary circumstances, even the com-

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plex tax returns of the very wealthy that are filed go unchecked. That's due to a deliberate decision by Congress to starve the IRS, both in operating funds and in manpower and expertise to conduct such audits. So forget about ferreting out serious nonfilers among the rich and prominent. That task doesn't even register on the tax fraud radar screen. Not surprisingly, representatives of Alec Wildenstein declined to discuss his tax affairs. Jocelyne's lawyer said she doesn't know anything about taxes, since Alec controlled the money. And the IRS can't comment on the tax matters of private citizens. Or in this case, the non-tax matters.

In the divorce case, Alec argued that he was not a resident of the United States, that he had a Swiss passport and visited this country on a tourist visa, and that he did not have a green card permitting him to work. Furthermore, he contended that he had "less that $75,000 in bank accounts" and that "my only earnings are approximately $175,000 per year." On a net-worth statement, Alec listed his occupation as "unpaid personal assistant to father Daniel Wildenstein." That stirred the ire of State Supreme Court Judge Marilyn G. Diamond, who presided over the hostilities. "He fails to explain why he is 'unpaid,'" said Diamond, adding that "this contention insults the intelligence of the court and is an affront to common sense."

Judge Diamond was also angered that Alec never bothered to attend the divorce hearings. Shortly after Jocelyne began unveiling intimate details of the couple's private life, he fled the country. He ignored repeated court dates, failing to appear to answer either the gun charges or his wife's allegations. At one hearing, an irritated Diamond excoriated Wildenstein in absentia for his refusal to obey court orders and to attend depositions. His attorney, Raoul L. Felder, the New York celebrity divorce lawyer, offered an explanation for his client's behavior:

"It may not be his disinclination to appear before the court. You are aware there are substantial tax problems we believe created by the plaintiff."

Judge Diamond agreed. "There are going to be more substantial tax problems," she said. "There are more substantial potential tax problems by people continuing to take certain positions. Make no mistake about it."

If this conjures up visions of battalions of vigilant IRS agents engaged in a relentless search to identify tax scofflaws and, when they do so, dun them for the taxes they owe, assess interest and penalties, seize their bank accounts and cars, freeze their assets, and auction off their possessions, well, that's what they are, visions—at least when it comes to the very rich. For the double standard is to tax-law enforcement what rock is to roll.

Suppose you earn $40,000 a year and don't file a return. When the IRS catches up with you it prepares a substitute return, estimates your income, calculates the tax you owe, tacks on interest and penalties, and sends you the bill. If you don't like their numbers, you must prove that the IRS is incorrect. What's more, the agency may seize your bank accounts, your car, and whatever else you have of value.

Not so with the truly prosperous. First, the agency mails out a computer-generated letter asking the nonfiler to submit a return. When the reluctant recipient fails to respond, a second letter goes out. And then another. And another. If the silence persists, IRS resorts to another tactic: The telephone. It tries to find the number of the missing nonfiler and place a series of calls. When all that proves futile—it generally does nothing.

Nothing?

That was a finding of a 1991 study by the General Accounting Office (GAO), the investigative arm of Congress, that examined IRS' handling of affluent nonfilers:

"The IRS does not fully investigate high-income nonfilers, which creates an ironic imbalance. Unlike lower income nonfilers in the Substitute for Returns program, high-income nonfilers who do not respond to IRS' notices are not investigated or assessed taxes. Even if high-income nonfilers eventually file tax returns, their returns receive less scrutiny than those who file returns on time."

What's the IRS's explanation for the double standard? Incredibly, it told GAO that it does not prepare a substitute return for rich nonfilers, as it does for middle-income people, because it fears that it might "understate taxes owed." In other words, no loaf is better than half-a-loaf. So do nothing. Second, GAO said, "to pursue more high-income cases, IRS would need additional staff." Which, of course, is precisely what Congress refuses to provide.

But things have changed since the critical 1991 audit that tried to prod the IRS to act, right? Indeed they have. With each passing year, the number of affluent nonfilers has gone up while Congress has slashed the service's auditing capabilities. There is no better evidence of the agency's breakdown than the fact the Wildensteins went two decades without filing a tax return, and the IRS knew nothing about it. ●

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The Legislative Shuffle

The pros and (mostly) cons of term limits

BY ETHAN WALLISON

BEING SPEAKER OF THE OHIO HOUSE OF Representatives these days means changing Finance Committee chairmen about as often as you get your hair cut. Speaker Joanne Davidson has had three such chairmen in this year alone. And that's only the beginning of her problems. All told, 13 House members have left the legislature in mid-session this term and, says Davidson, "I'm sure we'll see more before the end of the year."

Thirty-nine members of the Ohio House—Davidson included—will be forced out this year, when the eight-year term limits that voters imposed on members of the state House and Senate in 1992 finally ripen. A full third of the members who would have been termed out this year have already left, snatching the first attractive opportunities to come their way. They've got families to feed, and no future in the Ohio House of Representatives.

Though just a handful of legislatures have had experience with the reform to date, the full implications of term-limit measures passed in states across the country in the early and mid-'90s are beginning to come into focus, and the results aren't looking good. Legislators are doing more things that either are of questionable value (career padding) or undermine the political process (partisan infighting); they don't understand their jobs as well as they used to; instability has become the norm, and inefficiency the result. Members are becoming less collegial, less efficient, and may even be more influenced by the same special interests that term limits were supposed to neutralize. And in Ohio, they're just bailing out.

Even if you believe it is intrinsically good to shuffle the decks in the legislatures every couple of years, term limits have been, at most, a partial success. If you believe that a capable legislature is necessary to the orderly functioning of a state government, then term limits should give you great cause for worry.

In The Mood

Term limits were what you might call a mood reform. America seems to love experts in everything except for government, and the movement grew out of a visceral sense among voters across the country that the elected "experts" in the legislative process had "lost touch." People believed that legislators had created an entrenched political class whose principal interest was its own self-perpetuation. Voters saw signs of this estrangement everywhere. In Maine, a government shutdown in 1991 brought about the push for term limits, while a subsequent ballot tampering scandal added momentum; California's term-limits movement was set in motion in the 1980s by a brutal partisan battle over redistricting.

But the major factor—the one that gave the movement its national scope—was a cluster of scandals that bubbled up in Washington around the turn of the decade. "People got tired of all the abuse going on, especially in Washington, D.C., but also back in their state capitals," says Stacy Rumenap, a spokeswoman for U.S. Term Limits, the organization that has served as the spiritual godfather of the movement. Voters were inundated with information about corruption in the House of Representatives' post office and the credit union, about secret pay raises, and even about million-dollar member slush funds that may or may not have existed. One Speaker of the House had resigned in disgrace; the House whip also resigned rather than face an extended inquiry into his finances. After nearly 40 years of one-party control in Congress, this was the clarion call to the voting public. And the rush of state-level initiatives was on.

Beginning in 1990, the ballot measures began blazing across the country. And almost without exception, the voters approved them overwhelmingly. In Florida, term-limit reform passed with more than 76 percent of the vote; reforms passed in Colorado, Missouri, Nevada, and Wyoming by similar margins. The initiatives

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themselves varied greatly state-to-state. The most extreme initiatives imposed lifetime limits on service. This meant that once you reached full time you were out of the chamber permanently. Voters in four states—Colorado, Idaho, Montana and Wyoming—approved initiatives that require legislators to take a "time-out" of at least four years before resuming service. So-called consecutive term limits, which placed limits on the number of years legislators could serve in sequence, were approved in six other states.

Only 18 states have enacted term limits, but the figure is misleading. There are only 24 states with laws that allow voter initiatives on the ballot, and given that legislatures rarely want to impose limits on themselves (only two have ever done so) initiatives are by far the most reliable way to put term limits in place. So, put another way, voters have enacted term limits in three out of every four states where they can realistically do it. (Indeed, U.S. Term Limits has begun to shift its focus to efforts to open the ballots to initiatives in the 26 states that currently don't allow such measures.) Voters in three additional initiative states—Massachusetts, Nebraska, and Washington—approved term-limit ballot measures that were ultimately overturned by their state Supreme Courts because of state laws that conflicted with the reform's enactment.

As the term limits have gone into effect during the past years, supporters have already declared the incipient political experiment an unqualified success. "We haven't seen any evidence of anything bad," says Rumenap. She gives a quick review of what she described as the successes: Lobbyists are losing power; legislatures are running more efficiently; more—and more diverse—people are running for office. Maine, Rumenap notes, passed its budget on time last year; this was something of a novel occurrence. "There were all these critics who said term limits were going to disrupt these legislatures," she said. "And that just hasn't been the case."

Amateur Night

Rumenap's strongest argument is that seats are opening up and people are running. But even there, it seems that although there is more competition overall under term limits, there's less for incumbents. Scholars suggest that since would-be candidates know members will be termed out anyway, they have tended to wait their turn. After all, it's tough to unseat an incumbent under the best of circumstances.

Are there really "citizen legislators" coming in? In California, the number of self-described attorneys —and doctors and farmers, for that matter—is down in both chambers. The number of self-described "legislators" is up, and has reached nearly 50 percent in the Assembly (from 39 percent in 1989) according to a survey by Richard Clucas, a professor at Portland State University in Oregon who has studied the California legislature under term limits. Scholars have an explanation for this. They point out that so-called "gate-keepers"—the elders, officials, and activists who make up the core of political parties—don't get behind amateurs. They back experienced politicians, people who have paid their dues and cultivated a base.

But the main rebuttal to Rumenap's arguments is that term limits have made state government less effective. In California, which enacted term limits in 1990, lawmakers with as little as one year of experience are chairing committees; last session the bill passage rate was off a third from where it was when the reform went into effect. In that same session, the governor vetoed an extraordinary one of every five pieces of legislation that actually made it to his desk, and the two chambers exceeded their constitutional deadline for passing their budget bills by an average of 57 days. Meanwhile, the upheaval in the state legislative chambers in California, which set the maximum stay at six years in the State Assembly and eight years in the Senate, has been head-spinning. They have had seven speakers in the last five years, the same number as in the preceding 25. "Under a six-year term limit you're basically a 'lame duck' from the moment you become speaker," says Karl Kurtz of the National Conference of State Legislatures.

This is what Professor Clucas calls "the new amateur politics." "You don't even know where the bathroom is ... You may know how to run a campaign, you may know how to run a city council meeting. But you don't know how decisions are made at that level."

In Maine, the state's term limits have created their own unique dynamic. In 1995, the year before term limits went into effect in the legislature, 1,550 bills were referred to committee; by 1999, three years into term limits, the marker was 2,224. The figures on the Appropriations Committee in the House were particularly striking: referrals more than doubled, from 63 in 1995 to 136 in 1999. "What seems to be happening is that incoming legislators appear to be trying to make their mark quickly," says Matthew C. Moen, a political science professor at the University of Maine who has studied the state's experience with term limits. "If they aspire to be leaders, they realize they probably only have two or three years to make their mark."

In other words, ambitious members will spurn the slow acculturation and traditional rites of early legislative service, such as apprenticeship, because delay can cost them in the long run. They're out of the blocks like a shot.

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The result in Maine, Moen says, is that committees are now saturated with legislation, and concerns have been raised about the number of duplicate bills—a development that many believe can be chalked up to the inexperience of the incoming legislators who don't know what's already out there. To exacerbate matters, the rules in the Maine legislature require committees to report out—favorably or unfavorably—every piece of legislation that is referred to them. But they're not keeping up: The proportion of bills reported from the committees has declined from 94 percent in 1995, before term limits went into effect, to 87 percent last year and seems to be continuing to decline.

The results have been similar across the legislatures where term limits have come into play. And then there are the intangibles. In California and Michigan, which have some of the strictest term limits in the country, political observers have detected a sharp decline in collegiality as new members with little time to make an impression replace long-serving members who took time to cultivate relationships. "They don't sit down and make the friends they used to make. The coffee doesn't take time to percolate," says James M. Penning, a political science professor at Calvin College in Michigan and an expert on that state's term limits. "Frankly, there's a lack of trust."

"The thing that I think troubles a lot of people right now," Penning added, "is that the House doesn't seem to be functioning well as a legislative body. The spirit of cooperation that you'd like to see just isn't there. Nobody is willing to meet other people half way."

Limited

The truth is, for every assumed benefit of term limits—and every victory claimed by its supporters—there is weighty evidence to the contrary developing in legislatures across the country. Proponents of term limits anticipated, for instance, that the reform would make legislators more responsive to constituents by taking away the option of making a career of legislative service. They've accomplished that in several states, and now what are people getting? Unresponsive lawmakers. Rebecca A. Tothero of Michigan State University studied the voting habits of term-limited members in the Michigan legislature, and found that their attendance decreased at a "statistically significant rate" in their last year of service. Voting, of course, is the way elected representatives "respond" to their constituents.

In fact, many scholars argue that term limits actually diminish the need of legislators to be responsive by reducing the value of the electoral process that would otherwise be used to keep them in line. John David Rausch Jr., an expert on term limits, says the evidence so far has suggested that term limits put a premium on upward mobility that pits the needs of constituents against the career imperatives of legislators. He notes that GOP lawmakers termed out of the Michigan legislature have filled so many posts in Gov. John Engler's administration that the party is becoming worried there won't be jobs waiting for the members who get the boot this year. "We have this vision that a lot of these legislators go back to the plow," said Rausch, a professor at West Texas A&M University. "Well, they do go back to the plow—but they're plowing someone else's field."

In fact, if you take a step back, you will realize that the proponents of term limits had the premise all wrong: Legislators are more responsive to their constituents when they plan to *remain* in the legislature. And if you take one step further back, you will realize that the term-limits movement rests on another questionable premise: that legislators owe their careers to the Establishment, rather than to the people who vote. ●

FOLLOW IN FAMOUS FOOTSTEPS...

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Onward Conservative Soldiers

What we can learn about the conservative movement from five stalwarts

By Jacob Heilbrunn

A GOOD CASE CAN BE MADE THAT THE REAL radicals of the past century weren't on the left. They were on the right. Beginning in the 1950s, William F. Buckley Jr. set out not just to purge the right of anti-Semites, but also of Rockefeller Republicans. Once Barry Goldwater and Ronald Reagan had cleansed the party of the "wets," conservatives could get to post and assail the establishment—the liberal left, epitomized in the 1960s in the Rockefeller and Ford Foundations, Harvard and Yale, and so forth. Far from presenting an obstacle to conservative aspirations, the rise of the New Left and the McGovern wing in the Democratic party helped complete the destruction of the New Deal-era liberal establishment and created a new establishment that proved an ideal target for Buckley & Co. A new, hardened left-wing based on affirmative action, multi-culturalism, and opposition to American intervention abroad could easily be portrayed as a caricature of liberalism, which it was. Now conservatives, who had earlier heaped contumely on traditional liberals, could lament the perversion of traditional liberalism by the young leftists turned tenured radicals.

GANG OF FIVE: Leaders at the Center of the Conservative Crusade
By Nina Easton
Simon & Schuster, $26.00

The 1994 Gingrich revolution was the last stage in the general conservative revolt over the past decade. So sweeping were the aims of Gingrich and his paladins, however, that the American public revolted against the revolt—and President Clinton denuded conservatism of its most attractive features by hijacking them, the 1996 Welfare Reform Act being only the most prominent example of this political cross-dressing. As a result, the conservative movement is, in William Kristol's post-mortem after John McCain's victory in the New Hampshire Republican primary, "finished."

Or is it? For all his tacking to the center, George W. Bush owes conservatives big-time. Whether it's tax cuts, Supreme Court nominations, or the Strategic Defense Initiative, Bush will not have much leeway. And Bush's own memories of conservative disgruntlement with his father should help prompt him to remain on the straight-and-narrow path, even if he attempts to package his brand of conservatism as compassionate. Republicans seem more united than Democrats who carp about Al Gore and, on the party's left, worship at the shrine of the bitch-goddess Arianna Huffington.

Nina J. Easton's *Gang of Five* thus arrives at an opportune moment. A former writer for the *Los Angeles Times*, Easton seeks to excavate what she calls the "hidden history" of the baby-boom generation: the political rebels on the right who emerged on campus in the 1970s and decried the established liberal order. Easton is interested in personalities—her model is Walter Isaacson and Evan Thomas' acclaimed *The Wise Men*—and she focuses on five renegades: William Kristol, Ralph Reed, Grover Norquist, Clint Bolick, and David McIntosh.

Easton's book will be devoured by political junkies. No incident or anecdote seems to have been too trivial or recondite for her to chase down. The pace, though, never drags: Easton unites perceptive analysis with a lively prose style. She shows that these movement figures are, excepting Ralph Reed, products of elite universities. Bolick even comes across as hopelessly idealistic. Though her politics are clearly not those of her subjects, Easton approaches them in a sympathetic spirit of inquiry rather than condemnation.

The first thing that marks out Easton's book as a winner is the care she takes, as the literary theorists would say, to foreground her characters. Right off the bat, she launches into a discussion of the influence that German émigré Leo Strauss, one of the greatest political theorists of the past century, exercised on Irving Kristol and, by extension, William. Though Easton might have noted that Strauss himself was not particularly interested in contemporary politics, many of his influential disciples were. The *Cliff's*

JACOB HEILBRUNN *has written for* The New York Times, The Wall Street Journal, *and the* Times Literary Supplement.

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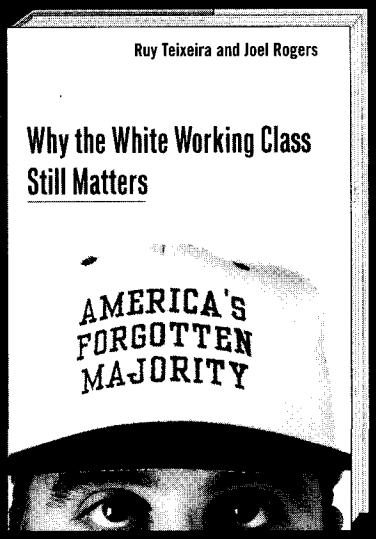

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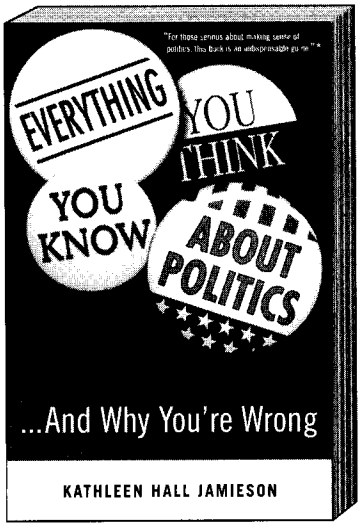

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Notes version of Straussianism would go something like this: Ancient philosophers, from Plato to Aquinas, had to write simultaneously in both an exoteric and esoteric code because their thoughts were too dangerous to communicate openly to the vulgar masses. Only Straussians could crack this code and understand the ancients as they wished to be understood, namely, that virtue was the highest good and that this truth could only be comprehended by an intellectual aristocracy. The Straussian bugbear is Machiavelli; he took the ideals of the ancient city down-market by lowering man's sights; the Enlightenment was the final blow because it emphasized egalitarianism and social engineering rather than virtue.

This truth rang as powerfully for Kristol fils as pére, says Easton. At Harvard, Kristol was indoctrinated into Straussianism by government professor Harvey Mansfield. The profoundly conservative, anti-modern message of Strauss seemed radical to Kristol and others. "To young men questioning the egalitarianism of the Left," writes Easton, "the insights of the philosophers they studied offered fortitude, making the case that the leveling of society would lead to a worship of mediocrity." There was more: "The notion that truth could be dangerous, or at the very least politically unacceptable, also rang true to students who had witnessed rising leftist orthodoxy on college campuses." Kristol wanted to become the adviser to powerful political figures; as Strauss himself wrote, "The political philosopher who has reached his goal is the teacher of legislators ... the umpire par excellence."

But Straussianism was not for everyone. Take Grover Norquist. Like Kristol, Norquist, the leader of the crusade against taxes, is also a Harvard graduate, but he inherited his world-view from his old man who, Easton relates, would grab his children's ice cream cones and steal a bite: "This is the federal tax." Another bite: "This is the city tax." Norquist became a freedom-fighter, traveling to Angola and Mozambique to champion nominally anti-communist leaders. Easton carefully shows how Norquist's rhetorical excesses, contempt for intellectual distinctions, and infatuation with warfare, at home and abroad, turned him into a divisive figure in the conservative movement, always sniffing out heresy in the ranks.

Kristol and Norquist are now at loggerheads. Easton notes that most of Norquist's populist activists have "stayed away from family life, despite all the talk about 'family values' pervading the right." By contrast, "Bill Kristol's circle of friends embraced bourgeois values." Still, no one can be pure enough for Norquist: in his eyes, even Ronald Reagan turned out to be soft. Easton reports that at a 1984 symposium at The Heritage Foundation, conservatives "vent[ed] their rage over the president's 'unwillingness to do battle with the Washington establishment.'"

Enter David McIntosh. Educated at Harvard and the University of Chicago, McIntosh has used his establishment credentials to ride roughshod over traditional liberal causes. A staunch libertarian, McIntosh headed Dan Quayle's Competitiveness Council at age 33. "When developers complained to Quayle about President Bush's pledge that he would countenance 'no net loss of wetlands,' the Council set out to change the definition of wetlands, taking millions of acres out from under federal protection." Now that he is leaving the House to run for governor of Indiana, McIntosh has slightly softened his stands, but the Federalist Society libertarian may prove the most potent of the gang.

Even McIntosh, however, has had to curb his anti-government rhetoric, chastened by the realities of constituent demands for government services. As Easton points out, conservatives never really figured out how to cope with Clinton. He may have roused them to new pitches of indignation, but the fervor with which

Everett Dirksen and His Presidents

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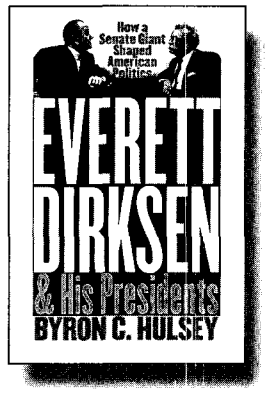
Byron C. Hulsey



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conservatives attacked the president only united the public behind him. Once conservatives began attacking the public as well, they seemed intent on becoming a parody of the New Left, which had decried the immorality of the U.S. Whether it was abortion or Clinton's behavior, the 1960s were seen as culpable for all of America's woes. In 1996, Catholic priest Richard John Neuhaus asked in his journal, *First Things*, whether "The End of Democracy?" had arrived. Robert Bork and Charles Colson suggested that civil disobedience might be in order to stop abortion. The parallel was completed by the Clinton administration's air war against Serbia; many on the right, with the notable exception of the *Weekly Standard*, condemned the American bombing of the Serbs and called upon the U.S. to heal itself before it intervened abroad.

Despite these antics and ructions, it seems wildly premature to write off the conservative movement. To be sure, conservatives, as Fareed Zakaria recently observed in the *New Yorker*, are a victim of their own success. The Soviet Union is gone. Welfare has been reformed. Crime is down. The economy, new or old, is booming. Conservatives have largely been deprived of their favorite activity: complaining about the miserable state of the union. But it is precisely the debates taking place within conservatism that may attest to its fundamental vitality. Kristol may complain that Republicans are gathering behind a nonentity for president, but his is the view of a permanent rebel. He's become bored with success. Indeed, given that Kristol has become fed up with the right, Bush would in many ways seem to be the perfect choice; a president who would carry out the right's agenda, even more than Reagan did, with bonhomie and imperturbability.

But count on it: Should Bush win the election, Kristol will go on the offensive against him for not being enough of a conservative. That kind of vitality, though, may be what ultimately keeps the conservative movement from running out of gas. An inherent tension is built into the conservative movement between the Straussian intellectuals and the religious populists. The contrast with the lassitude of the Democrats is striking. As far as intellectual firepower is concerned, the best that the Democrats can muster is the Democratic Leadership Council, while Ralph Nader blasts Gore from outside and Arianna Huffington gathers up the remnants of the left. Kristol is wrong. The conservative movement hasn't expired, and he's part of the reason why. ●

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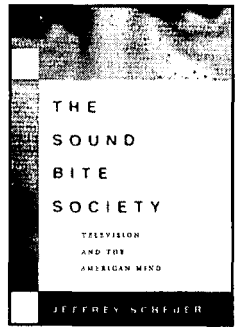
by Jeffrey Scheuer



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Capital Mismanagement

Nobel prizes and billions of dollars don't always equal success

By James K. Galbraith

ONE DAY IN THE EARLY FALL OF 1975 I SAT in the office of Rep. Henry S. Reuss (D-Wis.), Chairman of the House Banking Committee, for whom I then worked, along with Governor Hugh Carey of New York and Felix Rohatyn, Peter Goldmark, and David Burke of Carey's emergency team. Our purpose was to nail down a legislative plan to prevent the impending bankruptcy of the city of New York.

WHEN GENIUS FAILED: The Rise and Fall of Long-Term Capital Management
By Roger Lowenstein
Random House, $26.95

Toward the end of the meeting, Reuss asked me whether I had anything to add. "What about the windfall problem?" I asked. New York City bonds were trading at 30 cents on the dollar (or so I recall). When the bill went through, they would jump and anyone who bought them as we spoke would make a fortune. Carey turned to Rohatyn, "What about that, Felix?" Rohatyn shrugged, "Well, he's right."

Little did I know. The speculator existed, and his name, as we learn from Roger Lowenstein's genial account of Long-Term Capital Management, *When Genius Failed*, was John Meriwether. The New York crisis marked the takeoff of Meriwether's career, which went from bailout to bailout over 23 very exciting years.

When Genius Failed is a very good account of LTCM: clear, entertaining, informative, and judicious. The narrative has drama; the fate of the financial world was briefly at stake. It has complexity; there are serious issues of mathematics, statistics, and social science behind this story. Most of all, there is here a haunting portrait of our financial culture, where very ordinary people control extraordinary amounts of money.

Meriwether, pathologically self-effacing, emerges not unsympathetically in Lowenstein's portrait, except of course that he was crazily unsuited to running a financial firm. It is the other partners who fascinate, above all the professors Robert Merton and Myron Scholes, the fund's "philosophical fathers." The professors, we learn here, were peripheral to trading operations (Scholes, a "lesser partner" was "forever angling for more money"), but they were central to the marketing campaign. In this respect, their shared 1997 Nobel Memorial Prize didn't hurt at all.

Long-Term's basic strategy was to bet on the eventual convergence between the prices of extremely similar assets (the archetypal case being 30-year Treasury bonds issued today, "on the run," and the same bonds issued six months ago, "off the run"). By buying the cheap and selling the dear, convergence would bring a profit no matter the common movement of bond prices. In principle, it was a low-risk strategy, with tiny returns on each trade. And Long-Term made up the difference by leverage—by borrowing 10, 20, 50 times capital.

Leverage multiplies risk, but Long-Term believed that the underlying risk was so low that multiplication by leverage would not matter. This belief stemmed from a critical assumption: that the spreads between two essentially identical assets would be randomly distributed under a normal (bell) curve. Thus, the probability of a spread between highly similar assets moving too far in the wrong direction—of the cheap asset falling in price while the dear one rose, would be very slight and could be precisely calculated from the historical record.

Lowenstein presents the statistical issue competently, given that his own understanding is not deep and he expects his readers to have none at all. But he underplays a key issue. Economists have known for decades that the assumption of normality in the distribution of future events is false, particularly in financial markets. In 1937, John Maynard Keynes made the distinction between risk and incalculable uncertainty the foundation stone of his theoretical revolution. But Merton, Scholes, and the others came from a branch of economics that had rejected Keynes. That was their first mistake.

Worse, the fact that the distribution of asset returns is not normal was well known even in Chicago's financial-theory circles in the 1960s. Scholes' teacher Eugene Fama knew it; the case was first made to Fama by the mathematician Benoit Mandelbrot, father of fractals. Asset returns, Mandelbrot argued, follow a Pareto-Lévy distribution. They have (as Lowenstein puts it) "fat tails." Infinite variance. This means that catastrophic events are likely to happen all the time.

JAMES K. GALBRAITH *is a professor of economics at the University of Texas. His latest book,* The Nature of Mass Poverty, *will be published in September.*

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Fama and Mandelbrot should have rung down the curtain on the "efficient-markets hypothesis" 30 years ago. But economists would not give it up. Dumping the bell curve would have meant abandoning the use of econometrics in finance, and hence nullifying a vast body of published work. Careers would have been compromised, academic empires diminished. And then along came Merton and Scholes, who forgot the difference between an academic game and real life.

They also did not notice a key fact about their own operation. By buying cheap and selling dear, they were always betting on convergence. In this arcane way, all of their trades—no matter what they were superficially about, whether Italian bonds or common stocks and options—shorted the asset perceived to be safe and bought the asset perceived to be risky. As Lowenstein puts it: "It apparently did not occur to Rosenfeld that since Long-Term tended to buy the less liquid security in every market, its assets were not entirely independent of one another." And so they exposed themselves to the classically Keynesian event: a flight to quality. In 1998, the event occurred. Spreads all went the wrong way. LTCM lost all its capital in about five weeks.

This was inevitable. A few weeks after the debacle, I debated a Finance Department colleague in Texas on LTCM. He described the operation as being like a bet on Secretariat at the Belmont, to show. A sure thing, in other words. Do it with two dollars, you'll win a nickel. Borrow a billion and do it, and you're a hedge fund.

The analogy seemed exact to me, and I said so. But there was a twist. The LTCM assumption was that the very same Belmont, the third jewel in the Triple Crown, could be raced again, day after day after day. The second time, the third time—it isn't the same race. And if you double your bets every time, on the assumption that it is, bankruptcy is certain.

Who was the genius, then? Not Merton, an "evangelical" devotee of the bell curve. Not Scholes, a dapper and fast-talking marketing man. Not the computer gurus, who couldn't see the larger context of their operations and didn't think they needed to know. Not the top traders, impetuous, volatile, and seduced into directional bets on Russian bonds with no historical data.

No, the genius here was John Meriwether himself. It was Meriwether who saw a way to package academic celebrity, infatuation with the new technology of computerized investing, and his own aloofness into the creation of a firm that would snow the big money men in New York, Paris, and Zurich, bringing in the hundreds of millions of dollars of loans needed to leverage LTCM's trades. This was a masterpiece of manipulation.

And of course, when the big bankers realized they'd been had, they were vengeful. Lowenstein traces the unraveling of LTCM, and darkly hints that Goldman Sachs undermined the firm deliberately by selling identical positions while it was reviewing LTCM's books, driving up losses and making the firm easier to acquire. Only an effective intervention by a low-paid bureaucrat—Peter Fisher of the New York Federal Reserve—kept the banks together long enough to cobble together an orderly liquidation in the autumn of 1998.

Lowenstein criticizes the Federal Reserve for intervening, and so failing "to send the markets a needed dose of discipline." But here he is quite wrong. The Fed's job is not to teach lessons, but to keep the system afloat. It cannot have known exactly what the unraveling of LTCM's trillion-dollar exposure on the open markets might have meant. And as to lessons, if Lowenstein's account of the bankers is correct, the Fed would have been utterly foolish to suppose any of them were capable of learning. Lowenstein's criticism of Alan Greenspan, who has repeatedly defended the derivatives business on the hyper-ludicrous grounds that lenders supervise it closely, is more on the mark.

That, of course, is the enduring dilemma of the LTCM fiasco. These people who run the money world really aren't all that good.

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Political Booknotes

Unbalanced Czech Book

By Gregg Easterbrook

MOHANDAS GANDHI—WHAT A jerk! Mother Theresa, Martin Luther King Jr., Dorothy Day, Elizabeth Cady Stanton, Thomas Merton, Thomas Jefferson, Albert Schweitzer: a rogue's gallery of egocentric charlatans. People have said as much about everyone on that list, and now comes John Keane, a professor of politics at Westminster University in England, to add Václav Havel to the hall of shame. You may foolishly view Havel as a playwright, spirited dissident, and democratic hero to a peace-loving nation. *Václav Havel: A Political Tragedy in Six Acts* reveals the shocking underside. Havel drinks too much, smokes too much, had too much sex, is vain, and, as president of his country, he made mistakes! Take this man away and string 'im up.

Overstatement? *Václav Havel* begins by complaining that its subject is too well thought-of by the world though he is guilty of "knavery" and though "the harsh fact is that most of the citizens of President Havel's republic think less of him than they did a year ago." Keane cautions readers that "I have never believed in heroes" and then goes on to relate that when he first met Havel, in 1984, "he didn't look much like a hero to me." This Havel was "exhausted, overweight, depressed" and had trouble operating the stick shift of his car. He also seemed more interested in getting hold of a bottle of whisky than in talking to John Keane. Oh, and he'd just been released from five years in prison, did we mention that? And yet imagine that he would prefer whisky to being interviewed! What a jerk!

Keane declares, "Gone are the days when it could be assumed that biography was about recording the facts ... my account of Havel's life is unavoidably 'factional.'" Funny, I was not aware that the days of fact-based biography were gone or that resorting to "factional" techniques (whatever they may be) was "unavoidabl[e]." But at least the author gives fair warning.

VACLAV HAVEL: A Political Tragedy in Six Acts
by John Keane
Basic Books, $27.50

After its declaration of intent to destroy its subject, *Václav Havel* holds to form. The description of Havel's birth, for example, finds ominous portents in an old family movie ("inexpertly shot," the book jabs) in which parents and relatives fuss over the baby so much as to give the impression of "a child whose early months were not only coddled but *crowned*." Keane seems unaware that it is standard for parents to fuss over babies in lavish fashion.

The tale continues downhill from there. Along the way, *Václav Havel* offers considerable scholarly detail on the postwar history of Czech politics and culture, a subject which Keane has studied closely. But he always comes back to what a crummy guy Václav is. He smokes incessantly. (A common health failing in the old Eastern bloc.) He drinks to excess. (Many numbed themselves against communism with brandy, including many of the chief communists.) He once got so totally, falling-down plastered on a Prague winter's night that he tumbled into an icy canal and would have perished in drunken oblivion but for valiant bystanders. While earning crowns by publishing maudlin tributes to his wife and fellow dissident, Olga, he was openly fooling around and, just a year after her death, married a tomato young enough to be his daughter. (Havel stayed with Olga for 45 years, including through her lengthy illness.) He pretended to take the presidency of the country reluctantly, but actually desperately desired the job and maneuvered to keep it out of the hands of Alexander Dubcek, his rival for most-admired Czechoslovakian. Plus his plays are overrated and he liked to be photographed with airhead celebrities.

Keane's bill of attainder may be true so far as it goes, but it is rarely leavened with acknowledgment of Havel's accomplishments. Born in 1936, to live first under Nazi invaders and then Soviet totalitarians, Havel grew up believing in freedom as the highest ideal. Raised under social and political systems that despised free thought, he nevertheless became a genuine artist, and also helped cultivate art in others. Given the chance to live well and let others bear the sacrifice of dissent, he instead defied authority, mostly through the Charter 77 movement, enduring many trips to prison. (Keane seems to see the prison years as a career move on Havel's part; it's easy to think that once the danger is over.)

In the theater, Havel produced at least decent work. In letters, his 1979 essay "The Power of the Powerless," predicting that communism would crumble simply because people hated it, is among the shining works of political thought—it certainly displayed a better understanding of human nature than anything the communist thinkers wrote. Presiding over the Velvet Revolution, though of course far from its only important player, Havel was a force for peaceful democracy. And regardless of whether history determines the separation from Slovakia to have been the right or wrong course, Havel helped it happen without any of the bloodshed, confiscation, or recriminations that have characterized nearly all the national divisions of history.

Keane is right to contend that the world's reserve of admiration for Havel has not been adjusted for the fact that the last couple years of his presidency have been undistinguished—though with the Czech economy continuing to improve, the country's basic trajectory seems positive. Whether Havel brought it on himself with dissolute living or was simply the victim of bad genes, his health has become so poor that he no longer belongs in public affairs. This April, he publicly implored Madeleine Albright, who was born in Czechoslovakia, to return and assume its presidency. This isn't half as crazy as it sounds, and not just because European nations are accustomed to importing rulers; it shows that even in decline, Havel has his country's best interests in mind. And as for Keane's repeatedly stated complaint that Havel cannot be a great fig-

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ure because many countrymen dislike him, find me the great figure who didn't have detractors and sworn enemies among his fellows; start with Winston Churchill while you're at it.

Václav Havel concludes with a chapter in which the author envisions his subject's state funeral, predicting sweeping displays of ostentatious insincerity. "As he lay in state in the old Castle of the Bohemian kings above the city, a queue some miles long would spring up. Mourners would wait all day, and all night, to see his body for the last time... Around the graveside a forest of microphones, tripods, cameras, pads and pens would suddenly spring up... Harry Truman's remark that a statesman is a dead politician would be confirmed. Loud sounds of grinding axes would also be heard." This is weird stuff. Maybe Václav Havel is now an aging, sickly alcoholic who should take his garlands and go home to contemplate the garden and read old letters in the days that remain to him. But one person in a generation leads such a life, and whoever does deserves a sympathetic biographer.

GREGG EASTERBROOK *is a senior editor at* The New Republic.

Dances with Legislators

By David Plotz

IN THE PAST THREE YEARS, California has experienced one of the most astonishing and unnoticed political movements in U.S. history. A few thousand Indians have spent more than $100 million on lobbying, ballot initiatives, and campaign contributions to turn their quasilegal gambling industry into a fully legal one. In the process, they outfoxed a hostile governor and helped elect a sympathetic one, passed two ballot initiatives, sidestepped an unfavorable California Supreme Court decision, smashed a challenge by the Nevada gambling industry, and spent more money than any interest group has ever spent in the history of American politics.

But the tribes' triumph has been greeted with a shrug, even by most Californians. Americans have come to take for granted the Indian casinos that line the nation's highways and side roads. Gambling, supporters of this practice like to say, is the new buffalo. At the beginning of the '90s, only 14 tribes operated full-scale casinos. In 1998, 148 did. Tribal gambling has suddenly become a gigantic industry in numerous states and its profits have fueled political activism, cut tribal unemployment, improved Indians' health, and buttressed their education.

INDIAN GAMING: Tribal Sovereignty and American Politics
by W. Dale Mason
University of Oklahoma Press, $19.95

It was not a foregone conclusion that all this would happen, however, and it is not certain that it will endure. That is the message of W. Dale Mason's *Indian Gaming: Tribal Sovereignty and American Politics*. Indian gambling—I prefer not to use Mason's "gaming" euphemism—is the latest skirmish in a 200-year triangular war between the federal government, states, and tribes over Indian sovereignty. Tribes are (sometimes) winning this round, Mason argues, because they have mastered the tools of power politics: lobbying, lawyering, and money.

Written as a doctoral dissertation, *Indian Gaming* examines two case studies: New Mexico, where tribes succeeded in building significant gambling operations; and Oklahoma, where they have not. Mason begins with an excellent account of how gambling fits in the ancient dispute between disciples of Andrew Jackson and John Marshall over Indian sovereignty. The Jacksonian faction asserted that tribes are subject to state authority as well as federal. Marshall's Supreme Court declared that the Constitution grants tribes a sovereignty independent of states.

For most of U.S. history, the Marshall faction won the intellectual argument, but the Jacksonians determined the facts on the ground—up through the federal "termination" policy of the 1950s, to legislatively eliminate tribes.

But the Marshallites have been ascendant since the '60s, thanks to the Indian rights movement and a more sympathetic federal government. Tribes, Mason notes, have blocked state taxation, won control of mineral rights, and fought for legal jurisdiction in cases on tribal land. Gambling is the most high profile and important assertion of those rights.

Mason describes how the well-organized tribes of New Mexico repeatedly played political hardball to advance their gambling interests. In the early '90s, Gov. Bruce King refused to negotiate compacts required to make gambling legal, asserting that Class III (i.e. casino) gambling was impossible because the state criminally banned it. King, a Democrat, was a longtime supporter of Indian causes, but in the 1994 gubernatorial campaign, they switched their allegiance to Republican candidate Gary Johnson, who promised to sign compacts. They supplied Johnson with nearly 20 percent of his campaign war chest. He hammered out compacts once he was elected.

When the state supreme court voided the compacts on the grounds that New Mexico outlawed Class III-type gambling, the tribes ran to federal court and persuaded the U.S. attorney to hold his fire until the legislature could act. In 1997, after heavyweight lobbying and deal-cutting, they persuaded the legislature to allow Class III gambling and permit the compacts.

If the New Mexico experience proves the value of old-fashioned politics in Indian gambling fights, Oklahoma's suggests that such methods are not always effective. Oklahoma's 39 tribes, unlike New Mexico's, are fragmented. Most of them were herded into Oklahoma during the Indian Wars, and don't share language, governance structure, or lifestyle.

These conditions stifled Oklahoma Indians' gambling efforts. Most tribes opened bingos in the '80s, but the state squashed every effort to add Class III games. A U.S. Attorney raided a tribal casino and seized its illegal Class III machines. The Sooner tribes lacked the cash and clout to persuade the governor and legislature to sign compacts.

Mason sides with the Indians, and that's not a bad choice. He is right to applaud the political mobilization of an excluded group and to admire the New Mexican tribes for mastering interest-group politics. But by focusing narrowly on political relations and two small states, Mason skips the more ominous sociocultural and political implications of the rise of Indian gambling. In their understandable push for more lucrative

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TRIBUTE TO WAYNE ASPINALL — HON. SCOTT MCINNIS
(Extension of Remarks - March 28, 2000)
CONGRESSIONAL RECORD

—

HON. SCOTT MCINNIS
in the House of Representatives
TUESDAY, MARCH 28, 2000

Mr. McINNIS. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to pay homage to a man who sat in this august body for 24 years, from 1948 to 1972. Mr. Speaker, he served with six Presidents during that time, and was Chairman of the House Interior and Insular Affairs Committee. It was during his tenure in the House that the focus cleared on land and water issues in this great country. Mr. Speaker, I am referring to the late-Congressman Wayne N. Aspinall from the small peach and winery town of Palisade, Colorado.

Not only did Wayne Aspinall serve with distinction here, but his career in public service spanned over 48 years, including six years on his Town's Board of Trustees and 16 years in the Colorado Legislature. His six years in the Colorado House of Representatives included service as House Speaker for two years. As a state Senator for ten years, he served as both Majority and Minority leader. He was also a sergeant in the Air Service of the Army Signal Corps during World War I.

But let me talk further about Wayne Aspinall's time in the U.S. Congress. In 1956, as Chairman of the Subcommittee on Irrigation and Reclamation, he crafted the Colorado River Storage Project Act of 1956, which authorized Glen Canyon, Flaming Gorge, Navajo and Curecanti projects, plus several smaller projects authorized for construction and others designated for study. Aspinall's legislation was signed into law by President Eisenhower on April 11, 1956.

In 1959, Congressman Aspinall became Chairman of the U.S. House Interior and Insular Affairs Committee, as I mentioned. The ensuing 14 years of his leadership were probably the most productive in history in terms of water projects and national parks authorized and built or developed, wilderness areas designated, redwoods protected, the states of Alaska and Hawaii were admitted to the Union, public land law review, and so much more.

Mr. Speaker, this remarkable Congressman's accomplishments continued. In 1964, he paved the way to the Wilderness Act, which became law September 3 and designated 9.1 million acres of wilderness and set aside more for study. At the same time, the Land and Water Conservation Fund was established primarily for parks acquisition.

Then, in 1968, he created the Colorado River Basin Development Act, signed into law by President Johnson on September 30, which balanced development in the basin. On October 2 of the same year, his bill was signed protecting 58,000 acres of California redwoods and the Land and Water Conservation Fund was further beefed-up.

Finally, Mr. Speaker, he returned to his hometown of Palisade, Colorado in 1973 to live in a new home overlooking the Colorado River which his life's work had done so much to preserve as a valuable resource for the entire western United States. He died October 9, 1983.

Now, the citizens in his hometown plan to honor his memory with a one and a half time life-size bronze sculpture by renowned North Carolina artist Thomas Jay Warren. The statue will be the central feature of a Memorial which will include the representation of a dam and river. Several adjacent Memory Walls will be inscribed with the major achievements of the man known affectionately even today in Colorado as 'Mr. Chairman.' Members of the Aspinall Memorial Commission envision the Congressman Wayne N. Aspinall Memorial as an educational one, designed as much to teach students and others of the importance of sound water conservation, good government, and the history of water in the West as to record Mr. Chairman's stellar accomplishments.

The $165,000 Memorial will sit in the southeast quadrant of what is now known as Palisade Park, on a bluff above the Colorado River about 50 yards from the home to which he had retired.

Mr. Speaker, I commend the people of Palisade and of the entire State of Colorado for their effort to honor a man who served the great American West with such distinction. And I urge all of who can do so to support this project financially.

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Memos of the Month

TRIBUTE TO WAYNE ASPINALL -- HON. WAYNE ALLARD
(Senate - May 01, 2000)
CONGRESSIONAL RECORD
HON. WAYNE ALLARD

Mr. ALLARD. Mr. President, today I honor a man who spent 48 years of his life serving the public as an elected official for the State of Colorado. A man who served 2 years as the president of Colorado's 35th school district, 6 years as a board member of the town of Palisade, 6 years as a member of the Colorado House of Representatives, 2 of those as House Speaker, 10 years as a Colorado State Senator where he was both the Majority and Minority Leader, and 24 years as a member of the U.S. House of Representative where he was the Chairman of the House Interior and Insular Affairs Committee. I am referring to the late Congressman Wayne N. Aspinall from the small peach and winery town of Palisade, CO. Let me talk about Wayne Aspinall's time in the U.S. Congress. In 1956, as Chairman of the Subcommittee on Irrigation and Reclamation, he created the Colorado River Storage Project Act of 1956 which authorized Glen Canyon, Flaming Gorge, Navajo and Curecanti Reservoirs, plus several smaller projects authorized for construction and others designated for study. The act was signed into law by President Eisenhower on April 11, 1956.

In 1959, he became Chairman of the U.S. House Interior and Insular Affairs Committee. The ensuing 14 years of his leadership was viewed by many as the most productive in history in terms of new water projects, national parks authorized, wilderness designated, redwoods protected, the States of Alaska and Hawaii were admitted to the Union, and so much more.

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The $165,000 Memorial will sit in the southeast quadrant of what is now known as Palisade Park, on a bluff above the Colorado River about 50 yards from the home to which he had retired.

I commend the people of Palisade and other Coloradans for their effort to honor a man who served the great State of Colorado and our Nation with such distinction. I am proud to say that I knew him as a young man. My father, Amos Allard, was chairman of his congressional district. My family is proud of the affiliation with the Wayne Aspinall family and count ourselves among his many supporters. I urge all of who can do so to support this project financially.

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gambling, tribes have opened casinos alarmingly quickly. States that never intended to have significant gambling—such as California—suddenly find themselves inundated with casinos because of the vagaries of Indian gambling law. This expansion exacts tremendous social costs that the tribes don't have to bear: In California alone, the new Indian gambling is expected to double the number of compulsive gamblers. Indian gambling skirts useful government regulation. The Nevada government's strict oversight has kept its casinos squeaky clean. But most tribes regulate themselves, and several have already been caught cutting deals with mobsters.

Mason also glosses over the political danger of the Indian gambling explosion. He points out that tribes are the only governments that make contributions to political campaigns. (It's as though the Mayor of Boston contributed city money to a candidate for Massachusetts governor.) Mason sees this as a sign of tribes' admirable political gameplaying. I'd call it a sticky conflict of interest. More important, the amount of money in Indian gambling—and in all gambling—threatens the honesty of politics. Gambling, more than almost any business, has the potential to corrupt government, because it generates mammoth profits and its very existence depends on government imprimatur.

In California, the few dozen gambling tribes have become overnight the most powerful interest group in the state. The San Manuel Band alone spent $25 million on a single ballot initiative, more than $300,000 for each of its 85 members. The tribes have so much money that the state doesn't dare act against them, and too many state officials are drinking at their trough. In Connecticut, similarly, the Pequots and Mohegans have used their gambling duopoly to prevent opposition and ensure a friendly legislature.

Mason's book doesn't address the possibility of Indian gambling becoming too strong, because his cases don't warrant it. In Oklahoma, the state has squashed the tribal demands for Class III casinos. In New Mexico, the population is too diffuse for gambling to become a gigantic industry. But other Americans should worry. It's wonderful when the New Mexican pueblos get involved in politics and become an active interest group. It is less wonderful when the San Manuel Band or Pequots get involved in politics and buy up the government lock, stock, and barrel. Then the profits of Indian gambling can seem too much of a good thing.

DAVID PLOTZ *is the* Slate.com *Washington bureau chief.*

Lady Rats

By Liza Mundy

THE FIRST TIME I SAW A FEMALE VMI cadet was in early 1998 when my uncle, an alumnus of the Virginia Military Institute, died of a heart attack just months before his only son was to graduate from VMI. My daughter and I went down to Richmond for the funeral, which, movingly, was attended by hundreds of VMI cadets. It was the first year of coeducation, and at the reception afterward I kept scanning the crowd, hoping to spot one of the new women "rats" (as freshmen at VMI are called, to designate their status as the lowest creatures on earth). Finally, my dad introduced me to one. It turned out I'd been standing quite close to her. I just hadn't been able to distinguish her from her male classmates.

BREAKING OUT: VMI and the Coming of Women
by Laura Fairchild Brodie
Schocken Books, $26.00

From Laura Fairchild Brodie's fine book, *Breaking Out*, one learns that this was not unusual. After women came to VMI, following a Supreme Court order that they must be admitted, one of the many unexpected ordeals female rats had to endure was civilians mistaking them for men. When one rat, Nicki Myers, was traveling home to Virginia Beach over fall break, an old lady saw her in a rest-stop ladies' room, screamed "Young man, you can't be in here!", and began beating Myers about the face with her handbag. Similarly, when VMI's first group of women was invited to attend the dedication of the Women in Military Service for America Memorial, they were introduced to the crowd as men—from West Point. As it happened, some West Point women were also in attendance, and when they saw the female VMI rats, their first response was "my gosh—I can't believe your hair."

VMI, determined to make the women's experience as much like the men's as possible, had cut the women's hair shorter than at any other service academy. Even so, it was about an inch longer than the men's—one of countless issues, large and small, that led some VMI men to complain, inevitably, that the women were getting preferential treatment, that they weren't being worked as hard, that Rat Line (the rats' first six or seven months, a period of intense mental and physical stress) wasn't as hellish, that VMI would never be the same, etc.

At VMI, egalitarianism is an obsession. During the year preceding the entrance of women, their "special hygienic needs" was the topic of meeting after meeting. One particular topic was the question of which bathrooms would have tampon dispensers added and whether or not those sanitary supplies would be free; if they were free, the administration fretted, women would be getting something, strictly speaking, that the men were not.

In one sense the discussions (did women need private showers to wash themselves? If so, would this be unfair to the men, who showered in the open?) were absurd and fetishistic. But in another sense—as Brodie insightfully points out—it was part of a bona fide effort, on the part of VMI, to think through every facet of the women's arrival, to establish the conditions and set down the rules for accommodating women in a systematic way that no workplace has ever done. Such a sublime effort is bound to have its ridiculous moments: "One of the big arguments that came up," recalled the only female faculty member at the great Tampax debate, "was that if we were going to have the products in the bathroom, you all know that the men are going to go in there and steal them, and play with them, and make whistles out of them."

Such moments abound through this incident-rich book, which basically provides a chronicle of the year VMI spent preparing for the admission of women and the year following their

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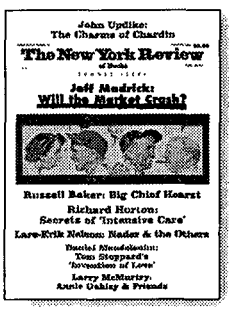

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arrival. Brodie intuits what an editor once told me: Chronology is a writer's best friend. Together, the narrative and the details make for swift and compelling reading.

More than that, the aggregation of such close-ups—even silly ones—quickly dispelled what had been my initial reservation about the book: the fact that Brodie was on the VMI committee to "assimilate" women, and, more important, that her husband is employed as the band instructor at VMI. While I myself have written about VMI while having family connections to the school, I worried that her family's financial stake might strongly bias her perspective.

While it's true that Brodie's position is fundamentally one of sympathy—she accepts VMI's eccentricities and never questions, as did some of my journalistic colleagues, why the state didn't just close such a weird place down, rather than opening it up to women—what becomes immediately apparent is the real advantage of her insider status. It allowed her access at a time when nobody else had it, providing her with a rare firsthand account of how a powerful public institution was handling the arrival of women. Most of all, the fact that people clearly knew and trusted Brodie produced the most astonishing quotes from cadets, alumni, and administrators; not just the offhand remarks but frank and on-the-record assessments of how things were going, such as one from an administrator who, during a discussion of whether the women should be provided with drying racks for certain, ahem, female items, recalled that:

"I'm looking around the room here, and there's a Marine combat veteran, there are two Army combat veterans, a couple of unit commanders, a Green Beret, all these he-man killer people sitting around considering whether we dry undies one way or another way."

One thing I have always liked about VMI is the sense of humor of its graduates, and Brodie does a good job of bringing this out. She also evokes some memorable images that go far beyond the routine coverage: a male cadet recalling how impressed he was when he went to wake two female rats for early morning physical training, only to discover that "they were already awake, with their hays [mattresses] rolled, and their racks [bedframes] up, and they were sleeping with their heads on their desks, ready to go out to PT ... I'd never seen that. But they knew what they were getting into, so they were ready." It was also fascinating to learn that when VMI administrators talked to women at other service academies, the women said that one of the few things that really did bother them was profanity directed at the female anatomy. Accordingly, it was decided that VMI would make some effort to clean up its rampant profanity. At the suggestion of one thoughtful cadet, a belt sander was taken to the classroom desks to remove the graffiti.

There are also reminders that women brought some much-needed changes. Thanks to them the campus got better lighting. Thanks to them the toilets got doors. Thanks to them, the track-and-field coach informed his athletes: "Your locker room has new carpet. We now have central heat and air. We have the shower fixed. We have more space. And our field house has been painted for the first time in probably fifty years."

Throughout the book, there were many things I hadn't thought of—VMI had to come up with a dating policy, for example, which meant one administrator had to define "date," which is surprisingly hard—and results I never would have predicted. Whereas alumni giving declined sharply at lofty places like Princeton right after coeducation, at VMI (a phenomenally well-endowed public institution) it actually increased. Brodie speculates that this is because the alumni didn't feel the school had sold them out: As they saw it, VMI had fought the good fight in fighting against women, had lost, and there was nothing to do but make the best of it. Another intriguing tidbit had to do with physical training, which is controversial at VMI and in the military as a whole. Unlike other places, VMI refused to have a different physical test for women than men. At the end of a year the women could do far fewer pull-ups than the men—a much-touted weakness—but Brodie also reveals that the women were averaging 78 sit-ups in two minutes to the men's 76.

Brodie doesn't gloss over the downside and hardships of assimilating women into the macho culture of VMI. Well, maybe she does gloss over them. It's impossible to know and in the end I don't care. She's got too much good stuff. Overall, her book is admirably even-handed and that, combined with the details, is enough for me. But what lingers most in my mind is another offhand comment she makes halfway through. While researching the book, Brodie was talking to a friend about VMI, and the friend commented that the issues raised by coeducation seemed to crystallize the central debate among feminists; when making one's way in a man's world, do you want to be treated exactly the same or do you want to be treated differently, because in some ways you are different? This is a question that has never been resolved, anywhere, in any office or any school or any home, and Brodie's book is a fascinating study of one unlikely place that's trying.

LIZA MUNDY *is a staff writer at* The Washington Post Magazine.

Playing In The Bandwidth

By Blair Levin

DID THIS SUMMER'S NEWS THAT a company you'd barely heard of (JDS Uniphase) paid $41 billion to acquire a company you had never heard of (SDL) make you feel uncomfortably like the character in the Bob Dylan classic—that "something is happening here but you don't know what it is, do you, Mr. Jones"? If so, read George Gilder's *Telecosm*. The book is a masterful, and highly readable, review of the science, technology, and companies that are changing the landscape of communications.

Gilder's central thesis is that the era of the "Microcosm"—a time defined by the creation of new abundance in computing power—is being replaced by the era of the "Telecosm"—a time defined by the new abundance in communications networks that will transform our world. The most important abundance is bandwidth, which is the measure of how many digital bits per second can pass through the network. Due to advances in fiber optics (using glass and lasers to transport the bits) increases in bandwidth over the next few years will

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enable us to send thousands of times more data far more quickly and cheaply than we do today.

The resulting change will be more profound than that engendered by the Microcosm. As Gilder points out, communication is more central to our lives than computing. While most humans have a limited universe for problems that require massive new computing power, the human capacity to use new forms of communication, from wireless phones to e-mail to instant messaging, is limitless.

TELECOSM: How Infinite Bandwidth Will Revolutionize Our World
by George Gilder
Free Press, $26.00

Gilder takes his readers on a survey of the underlying physics involved in transformative communications technologies. He introduces us to some of the thinkers whose insights years ago led to the developments we are just beginning to observe. Gilder then profiles the companies he thinks are going to be the big winners in this new era. He concludes with a thought-provoking set of "20 Laws of the Telecosm."

But while Gilder's overview of the emerging landscape is the best I've read, his love of technology obscures his vision when non-technical factors come into play. His analysis of business strategy is often overly dependent on whether a company fits into his paradigm. It is one thing to conclude that fiber optics will change communications. It is another to predict which companies will succeed and what strategies will make them a success. While most Wall Street analysts would be proud to have had Gilder's track record over the last decade, in looking forward his analysis misses some key criteria for success. For example, a major beneficiary of the "Telecosm" is Cisco. But Cisco's success came not from an unparalleled excellence in a single technology but from its ability to spot markets, buy leading-edge technologies in those markets, and integrate them quickly into a well-oiled operation that could offer end-to-end solutions for companies trying to take advantage of the changes Gilder discusses.

Gilder also ignores the strategic benefits of having certain bottlenecks that companies can use to succeed against competitors. For example, Gilder is a big believer that networks should be "dumb." That is, the pipes that carry the bits should not be integrated with those that produce the content of the bits. Gilder believes that companies that try to integrate the two, such as AOL and AT&T, are doomed.

This debate, which mirrors earlier debates involving broadcasting and cable networks, is not as black and white as Gilder believes. Some companies have clearly benefited from integrating content and conduit. Some companies have tried and failed. But the difference between the success and the failure is not an ideological one; it is determined by a host of details, from marketing to product selection to customer service.

This is the very issue raised in the proposed merger between AOL and Time Warner. Disney has led an effort to get the government to separate their content and conduit parts of the business on the grounds that the combination would give the resulting entity the power to foreclose competition. Gilder would presumably argue that its size won't matter because the tension between the content and conduit sides of the business will doom it. Gilder may be right in the long run, but anyone who reads Disney's parade of horribles, or AOL's arguments to Wall Street about the benefits of the merger, would acknowledge that there are some significant business benefits to combining a variety of holds over the customer.

And in this world, where businesses succeed and fail based on a multitude of factors of which technology is only one, size matters. This leads to the second shortcoming of Gilder's analysis. His public policy beliefs reflect an almost ideological faith in technology's ability to overcome market barriers to innovation and competition. Gilder is dismissive of the power of large companies, such as incumbent phone companies, because they lack entrepreneurial agility and possess out-dated, slow networks. He suggests the way to deal with them is to give them everything they want. But Gilder ignores that the world he extols would not be possible without new competitors in the market who have an interest in creating new markets. And that those new competitors, particularly the Competitive Local Exchange Carriers who are

One man had the nation's ear.

Decades later we still don't know who he was...

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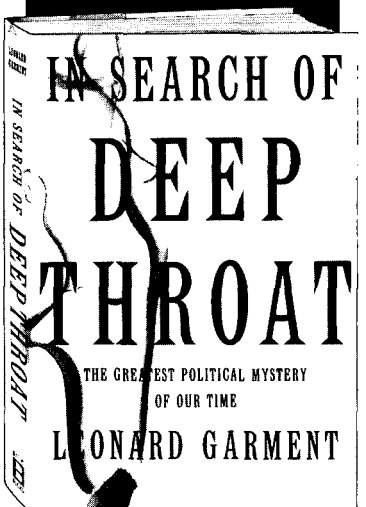

"Meet me on the park bench in Lafayette Square facing the White House on this date in 2025. I'll be the one holding a first edition of IN SEARCH OF DEEP THROAT. For I suspect it will still be worth reading then."
–Michael Oreskes, Front page
New York Times Book Review

From the man who served as Counsel to the President in the tumultuous last days of the Nixon Administration, comes a fascinating evocation of that crucial moment in our nation's history, and the first book to make a convincing case about the real identity of the man known for three decades only as Deep Throat.

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driving the demand for the higher-speed networks, would not exist if government didn't limit the power of the incumbents to crush them in the market.

Still, the map that Gilder draws of the world transformed by "infinite bandwidth" is worth following. Because something is happening here, and Gilder's got a pretty good take on what it is.

BLAIR LEVIN *is a former Chief of Staff of the FCC who is now a telecommunications consultant in Maryland.*

The Jewish State

By Joshua Hammer

SAMUEL FREEDMAN BEGINS HIS new book with an ambitious thesis: a "civil war" has broken out among America's Jews. It's a struggle, says the former *New York Times* reporter and author of three previous books, that threatens to tear the religion apart. It's a battle to define the 'true Jew'—one that pits secularists against fundamentalists, hawks against doves, Torah purists against Torah relativists. And it's only going to get worse.

JEW VS. JEW: The Struggle for the Soul of American Jewry
by Samuel G. Freedman
Simon & Schuster, $26.00

Freedman spent three years traveling across the country reporting on the struggle from the front lines. At a half-dozen stops along the American trail, he finds conflicts where emotions run deep and neighbors turn against neighbors with astonishing vitriol. The result of his research, *Jew vs. Jew: The Struggle for the Soul of American Jewry*, is a fascinating study of a family splitting at the seams. It also leaves one wondering whether the author is presenting the Jewish landscape as it really exists.

As Freedman sees it, American Jewry's halcyon days came in the period around World War II, when the community was bound together by Yiddishkeit, a common identity rooted in language, culture, and ethnicity. The ultimate symbols of that period were the Jewish summer camps in the Catskill mountains where campers celebrated socialist values and sturdy Zionist pioneers. But in the post-war era, that consensus fell apart. Declining religious observance and intermarriage left the majority of Jews with only a few vestiges of their Jewish identity—what Freedman calls "Seinfeld and a schmear." At the same time, a resurgent Orthodox movement was drawing strength and becoming increasingly strident about what makes a true Jew. Meanwhile, Israeli politics were turning violent, culminating with the Rabin assassination in 1995. As a result, a growing number of fissures are cracking apart the Jewish landscape.

Freedman is a masterful reporter and storyteller, and he wrings drama out of a mosaic of disputes across America. He relates the saga of a decade-long attempt to build a massive synagogue and yeshiva complex in Beachwood, Ohio for the Orthodox—and how the Reform Jews ultimately shot it down. He recounts the long ordeal of a gentile woman who agrees to convert to Judaism to appease her Orthodox in-laws, only to find herself in the middle of a fierce battle among Denver's rabbis about what makes a true conversion. He tells the story of the Yale five: Orthodox Jewish students who made headlines three years ago when they filed suit against Yale University for requiring them to live in co-ed dorms with co-ed showers. Freedman's most compelling yarn traces the descent into criminal rage of a Jacksonville Jew, Harry Shapiro, who planted a phony pipe bomb at a Jewish community center in order to disrupt a speech by Prime Minister and peace advocate Shimon Peres.

Still, after reading these absorbing stories, the reader may find something nagging him. Has Freedman, one wonders, exaggerated? It's hard to deny that "America's six million Jews are pulling to the extremes," that more Jews are assimilating, and that the Orthodox Jews have emerged as the most vibrant and charismatic wing of the religion.

But to present a misfit like Harry Shapiro as representative of a growing radical underbelly in American Judaism, or to talk about "civil war" based on five smoldering controversies seems a bit of a stretch. In the end, Freedman doesn't quite manage to stitch these individual tales together into a patent whole. And that undermines his central thesis: that Judaism is breaking apart into two intractable halves. One comes away from *Jew vs. Jew* with the sense that there's a lot of name calling out there, a lot of Jews referring to each other as 'Hitler' and 'Haman.' That may not be civil, but it definitely isn't war either.

JOSHUA HAMMER *is Newsweek's Berlin Bureau chief and the author of* Chosen By God: A Brother's Journey.

The Senate Contrarian

By Tom Brazaitis

GODFREY HODGSON, A FRIEND and confidant of Daniel Patrick Moynihan and his family for almost 40 years, frets at the start of this new biography about putting their long-standing friendship at risk by trying to write truthfully. Not to worry. If Moynihan takes offense at this tribute, his skin is even thinner than anyone knew. *Gentleman From New York* opens with a chapter titled, "The Prophet," and closes with "The Legislator as Magnifico." Hodgson twice quotes journalist Michael Barone's assessment of Moynihan as "the nation's best thinker among politicians since Lincoln, and its best politician among thinkers since Jefferson." Lest anyone miss the point, he throws in the observation by Moynihan's close friend, Sen. Bob Kerrey of Nebraska, that "few people in our history, save Thomas Jefferson, have had as much impact on our nation and our government."

Since Moynihan never was elected president, never ran for president, never was considered for vice president, and yet is favorably compared with two of our greatest presidents, one might conclude that he is an underachiever. Three-quarters through the book, Hodgson reports that "at times in 1978 and 1979 [when Jimmy Carter was foundering in the White House] he did think quite a lot about running for president." But there was the difficulty of running against an incumbent president of one's own party to consider. And if Sen. Edward Kennedy wanted to try it, which he eventually did, his candidacy "might make a Moynihan campaign look trivial by comparison," Hodgson writes.

Then Hodgson reports, as if revealing a state secret, that "several of his friends have suggested to me anoth-

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er personal factor: alcohol. They believe that he did not run for president at least in part because he (and his wife) were aware that he might be betrayed, even humiliated, by talk of his drinking." Hodgson says the key question is whether alcohol has affected Moynihan's performance as a politician or as a public servant. "My own view is that it has not," he says. "Others claim to have seen him staggering. I can only say that I have not, after observing him on a large number of occasions ... ." He punctuates his defense by paraphrasing Lincoln's order to supply his other generals with a barrel of whatever whiskey Ulysses S. Grant was drinking, coincidentally the same anecdote George Will employed in a tribute to Moynihan some years ago.

GENTLEMAN FROM NEW YORK: Daniel Patrick Moynihan—A Biography
by Godfrey Hodgson
Houghton Mifflin Co., $38.00

It is quite natural for journalists to be protective of Moynihan. As Hodgson astutely notes, Moynihan "is at heart a journalist." Hodgson speculates that, had it not been for the narrow Democratic primary victory over Bella Abzug in 1976 that launched his Senate career, Moynihan might have become the greatest columnist of his day. Moynihan is like George Plimpton, sampling various careers—professor, diplomat, politician—to write, from personal experience, his numerous books and countless articles on the workings of the world. Like the best journalists, he is good at identifying problems before the rest of us. But, Hodgson says, "What was also all too typical was his failure to follow through in political and legislative terms. He spotted a discrepancy, understood its meaning and its importance, educated [others], then stood back, leaving it to others to act ... on his undeniably original perception." Thus, Moynihan has been a harsh critic of presidents, Democrats Carter and Clinton in particular, but probably would not have made much of a president himself.

Anyone who watches "Meet the Press" (moderated by Moynihan's former aide Tim Russert) knows that Moynihan is a master of the sound bite. Calling Clinton's health-care plan "fantasy" and his welfare plan "boob bait for bubbas" certainly wasn't gentlemanly, but it made for good TV. And Moynihan laces his writings and speeches with memorable phrases—"benign neglect" and "defining deviancy down," to cite two—that keep print reporters happy too. Moynihan, Hodgson says, is "a man who speaks out, who dares to think for himself and to say what he thinks, even if it hurts"—even if members of his own party sometimes wonder what uniform he is wearing. No wonder he has more friends among journalists than politicians.

Hodgson, director of the Reuters Foundation Program for journalists at Oxford University, is a solid journalist in his own right, whose coverage of the United States has ranged wide and deep. He expertly traces what Moynihan calls the senator's "chance encounters and random walks"—from Harvard professor to subcabinet and cabinet posts under Kennedy, Johnson, Nixon, and Ford, as ambassador to India and the United Nations, and finally to the Senate. And at every point along the way Moynihan has left a trail like a tracer bullet. Legendary FBI director J. Edgar Hoover wrote in his own hand, "I am not going to see this skunk." Henry Kissinger wanted Moynihan for the UN job only to conclude later that he was not, in a word, diplomatic. Nixon sent Moynihan a note asking him for a list of 10 books to read.

After their clashes over health-care reform, the day Moynihan stepped forward to endorse the First Lady for his cherished seat in the Senate must have been bittersweet for both of them. Moynihan's wife and campaign manager, Liz, "did not get on well with Hillary Clinton at first," Hodgson says. He reveals that Liz Moynihan's best friend in Washington was Barbara Bush, which helps explain the friction between Liz and Hill, who comes from the brash generation of career women. Moynihan unabashedly trashed Hillary's health-care plan for trying to be all things to all people. When a Democratic president puts forth a major legislative initiative one might expect the Democratic chairman of the Senate Finance Committee to at least feign support. But going along is not Moynihan's style. Rob Shapiro, who worked for Moynihan from 1981 to 1986 and eventually joined the Clinton administration, observes that Moynihan "always manages to position himself as a critic of the conventional wisdom." For better or worse, that is what has made the Gentleman from New York stand out from the long, gray line of politicians.

TOM BRAZAITIS *is senior editor in the Washington bureau of* The Plain Dealer *and co-author of* Madam President: Shattering the Last Glass Ceiling.

Misunderstood War

By Thomas E. Ricks

THE FRENCH AND INDIAN WAR, dimly remembered by Americans as a prelude to their revolution, is usually portrayed by historians as a struggle between the British and French empires for control of North America. Subsequently, it is sometimes seen by 20th-century writers as part of "the first world war," the conflict between the two empires that began in southwestern Pennsylvania and spread over seven years to the Caribbean, West Africa, India, and the Philippines.

The military historian John Keegan captures this conventional view in his introduction to the Modern Library's recent re-issue of Francis Parkman's 1884 account of the French and Indian War, *Montcalm and Wolfe*. Keegan writes that, "The story of the struggle between Britain and France to control the continent of North America is one of the great dramas of history." It is indeed a great story—how the French, holding most of the continent, from New Orleans to the Great Lakes and out to the Atlantic, managed to lose it to the British and Americans, who only controlled a thin strip along the Atlantic seaboard.

But it isn't as simple as conventional history tells it. Fred Anderson's terrific new history of that war goes a long way toward correcting the traditional view—but not quite far enough. I think it is a far better history than *Montcalm and Wolfe*, Parkman's supposed classic, which I find nastily anti-Catholic and mindlessly pro-American. As related by Anderson—a University of Colorado

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historian who, despite his academic perch, writes readable narrative history—the half century that followed 1750 was a four-way brawl for control of North America, not simply a contest between two empires. It began with two of the parties, the French and Indians, allied against the other two, the British and their American cousins.

In Anderson's version, the French lost because their strategic alliance with the Indians broke down. Most histories would end there, with James Wolfe taking Quebec in September 1759. But for Anderson, Wolfe's victory is only the halfway point, told in the 36th of his 74 chapters.

CRUCIBLE OF WAR: The Seven Years' War and the Fate of Empire in British North America, 1754-1766
by Fred Anderson
Knopf, $40.00

As Anderson tells it, the next phase of the struggle began almost immediately, with the Indians taking on the remaining two parties, the British-American alliance. First came the Cherokee War in the Carolinas and Tennessee, soon followed by "Pontiac's War," a name that understates the great rising of Indian tribes from Michigan to Pennsylvania and New York.

And when that war petered out, the last phase of the struggle began: the battle between the British and the Americans. Unfortunately, Anderson chooses only to tell the initial, less interesting part of this fight—all the acts of Parliament (Sugar, Currency, Quartering, and Stamp) that put us to sleep in high-school history classes. Here, in the last third of his history, he falters somewhat, lost in the swamps of late 18th-century political factions, both in the colonies and London. This last part of the book feels to me like half a story, with the climactic years that led to the American Revolution left untold.

But read this book to revel in its first two-thirds, where Anderson's hand is surer and his material better. He narrates the war well, intelligently weaving together the tactical details (which make his story interesting) with the strategic outlines (which make his story significant).

The French and Indian War began with young George Washington leading an ambush of French troops in May 1754 in the woods of southwestern Pennsylvania. Anderson relates in awe how the British commander in North America, General Edward Braddock, marched into disastrous defeat in the same area a year later with a shocked Washington at his side.

The force that beat Braddock was two-thirds Indian. "The French understood the importance of Indian alliances very well," Anderson writes, while the British didn't—and so the French rolled up victory after victory for the first three years of the war. In an interesting aside, Anderson also reports that French Canadian militiamen generally took their cue from their Indian allies, refusing to attack, for example, if their Indian comrades balked.

Anderson is at his best in describing the strategic consequences of the battle at Fort William Henry on Lake George, New York—the key event in "The Last of the Mohicans"—which was in some respects the turning point of the land war. He describes the battle as a kind of Indian Woodstock, with the word out that Indians who had aided the French in the previous year's battles were swimming in brandy. Indian warriors, he writes, "traveled as far as fifteen hundred miles to join the expedition." But when the terms of British surrender forbade the Indians to plunder the fort, the frustrated Indians made up for it by attacking the hapless British force as it retreated southward, in the episode that became known as "the massacre of Fort William Henry." The incident both galvanized the English colonies behind the war effort, and soured Franco-Indian relations, as the French became less enthusiastic about their allies.

Anderson also has fun taking James Wolfe down a few notches. He portrays the famous victory at Quebec as a selfish suicide attempt gone wrong—that is, a general, at the end of his rope and facing a return to Britain in disgrace, deciding to launch a hopeless attack and then trying to call it off as it began.

Anderson argues persuasively that Parkman and other historians have attached far too much significance to Wolfe's victory in Quebec. The true strategic "Day of Decision" in 1759 that won North America for the British (at least for another 25 years) was, he argues, the naval battle of Quiberon Bay, an event Parkman glides over in four quick sentences in *Montcalm and Wolfe*. In that encounter off the southern coast of Brittany, the innovative British admiral Sir Edward Hawke destroyed the last effective French squadron on the Atlantic. Thereafter, Anderson observes, the British Navy could destroy French commercial shipping, stifle any attempt at reinforcement, and operate without fear of French attempts to land troops in Britain. For the remaining three years of the war, the British took French forts almost at will on three different continents.

But the subsequent war with the Indians left the British in a poor military position: When mobs rioted in Boston and New York to protest the Stamp Act, Anderson notes, most of the British troops in North America were posted to Canada and the Indian territories west of the Appalachians. Here Anderson begins to lose his deft touch as he tries to enliven the political debates of the late 1760s, but brings the curtain down on his story just as those debates begin to point toward the American Revolution. But the first two-thirds of this history are marvelous, and worthwhile for anyone seeking to understand how the United States came into existence.

THOMAS E. RICKS *is a Pulitzer-prize-winning military affairs reporter for* The Washington Post.

South African Pieces

By Tara Mansbridge

IN *WATCHING THE WIND*, SUSAN Collin Marks describes the push for peace in local South African communities struggling to deal with life after apartheid. From her own experiences working to implement the 1991 National Peace Accord, which laid the groundwork for South Africa's 1994 elections, Collin Marks

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culls a collection of the stories that have gone unnoticed by an international community that has focused on the political movements in the upper levels of South African society. With sensitivity and care, Collin Marks describes the life and work of peace workers who put themselves at daily risk in order to facilitate South Africa's transition to democracy: activists sitting across the negotiating table from their torturers; brave citizens putting themselves between enraged crowds and frightened, combative police; community groups working desperately for change. Through these stories *Watching the Wind* seeks to capture and explain how South African society managed to move from apartheid to democracy without suffering the fragmentation undergone by other countries in transition.

WATCHING THE WIND: Conflict Resolution During South Africa's Transition to Democracy
by Susan Collin Marks
United States Institute of Peace Press, $14.95

The problem is that *Watching the Wind* lacks a broader perspective into which its pieces can fit. The book strings together situations and people that only achieve unity if the reader is familiar with the political history of South Africa. The chapters take on the character of memory snapshots, lacking the driving continuity that would make them come to life for someone other than a peace worker or a South African.

One has the feeling that the various sections were developed as discrete entities, perhaps even as tools for conflict resolution workshops, instead of as chapters in the ongoing story of a society working for change. This makes the book hard to follow at times, causes Collin Marks to repeat herself, and in the end is likely to limit the book's audience.

That's a shame because, for all its shortcomings, *Watching the Wind* presents some wonderful portraits of what many South Africans were thinking, feeling, and suffering on the long road to democracy. It is an album that should be studied by societies and citizens who wish to understand how factions scarred by decades of violence and hatred were able to come together to forge a meaningful peace.

The Importance of Being Norman

By W. Scott Thompson

NORMAN PODHORETZ, WHILE touring Asia years ago, commented that no matter what detours we make professionally, we always feel soundest when we return to that in which we were trained. This is particularly true in this fine and revealing book. When Podhoretz works outward from literature, in which he was so well educated, to the political themes of the day, he is on his firmest ground and dazzles.

The book centers around a reflection on anti-Americanism both abroad and within the radical elite emerging during the Vietnam War. Dealing with anti-Americanism almost had to be the defining dilemma of an internationalist American of Podhoretz's generation. We are just too rich and too successful to be left alone on our pedestal. Few have written as eloquently—or with more pain—of the ironies and injustices that accompany the tirades we receive abroad (when our foreign friend isn't seeking a scholarship to Harvard, trading on the NASDAQ, or using our courts to gain advantage from us). This, after all, is the book's theme, its title, and its passion.

MY LOVE AFFAIR WITH AMERICA: The Cautionary Tale of A Cheerful Conservative
by Norman Podhoretz
Free Press, $25.00

For Podhoretz the highest injustice was domestic, when local radicals (read 'negroes,' as he often calls them) join anti-patriotism to anti-Semitism. Anti-Semitism rightly angers him and dominates the background of the book. But he admits it had become advantageous to him (as to others) to be Jewish in America, so one is forced to wonder why this otherwise appropriate concern figures so powerfully herein.

Podhoretz is at his best in showing how we as a culture worked through our understanding of our American selves and our genius through literature—by (for example) a timely analysis of early Bellow, when that kindred spirit can't quite deal with his (American) identity. Thus *Augie March*, he argues, fails, because Bellow "had not yet quite been liberated from the old attitudes toward America to which the novel was issuing a multifaceted challenge."

The problem with Norman Podhoretz at almost all times is that he doesn't quite know where he fits in. Thus he gets the book off on the wrong foot in the very first line—by telling us who Dr. Johnson is. So who does he think his readers are? I suppose one of the reasons he ended up on the right is less because its people harmonized with him in attitude toward America than because he was never really sure of himself in any group, and that was the last one to which he could migrate (as he implicitly grants at the end).

When he retreats into himself, with his insecurities laid bare, the book reads thin. As interesting as his autobiographical chapters are, one gets a bit of the very whine he complains so eloquently of in America's critics. Over and over themes of growing up poor in a sea of at least incipient anti-Semitism engulf us—but Podhoretz always starred. He won coveted fellowships, he dominated a sector of the New York intelligentsia for decades, and forced us all on his intellectual-psychological quest for identity in his stunning memoirs. And in listing his nine gratitudes—somewhat odd for one who wanted "fame" not money—he even tells us of his Hampton cottage.

He made it. But he's still not quite sure. He was always a little concerned that he was not as "real" an American "as someone whose people had come here earlier than mine." But there's always someone more recent, and it is hard to see why Podhoretz didn't get over this one early on. As FDR said to the Daughters of the American Revolution, "Greetings, Fellow Immigrants."

Podhoretz's books are like everything about him: big, except in size. This is not a long book, but it is big in spirit and big in defects. It wanders and it is defensive. But nobody has ever said better or less defensively what is fine about America.

W. SCOTT THOMPSON *is co-author of the forthcoming* The Baobab and the Mango Tree: African and Asian Contrasts.

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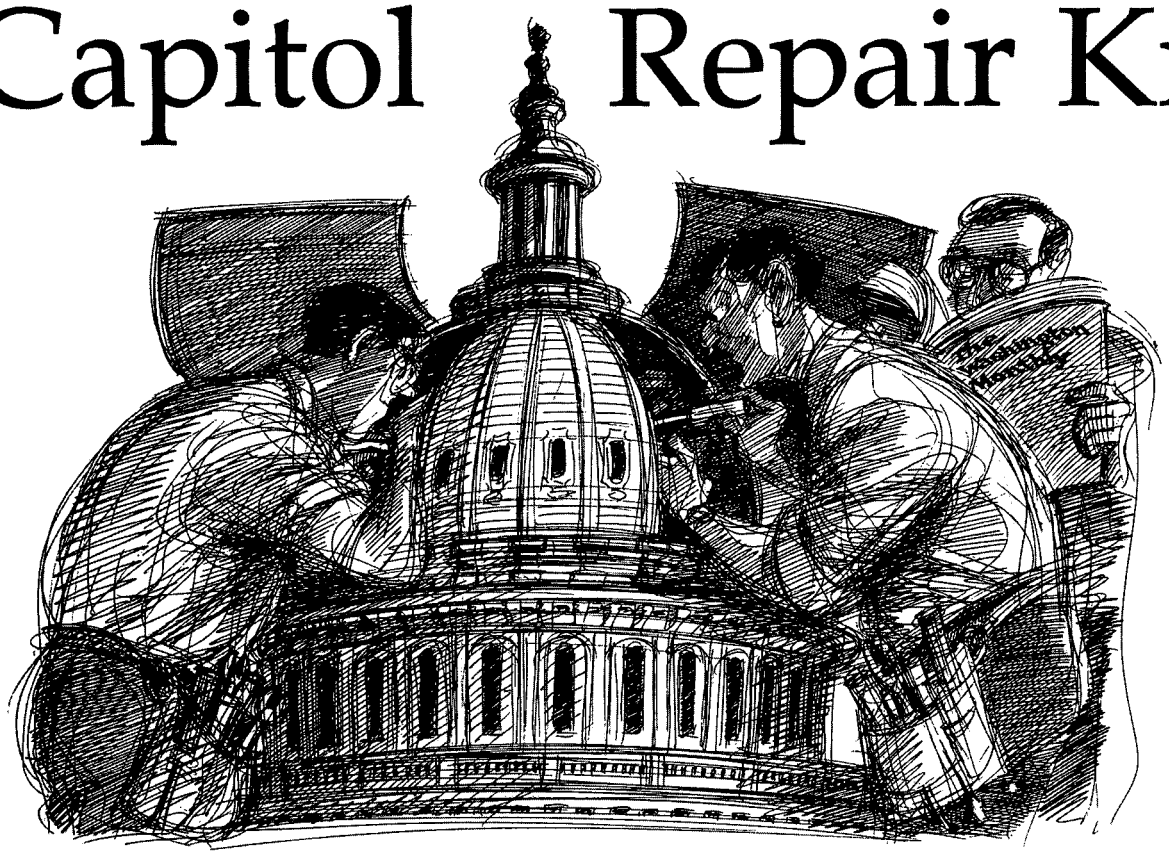

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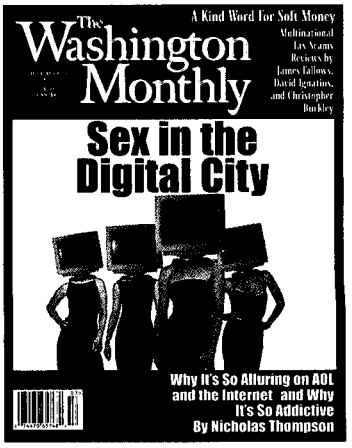

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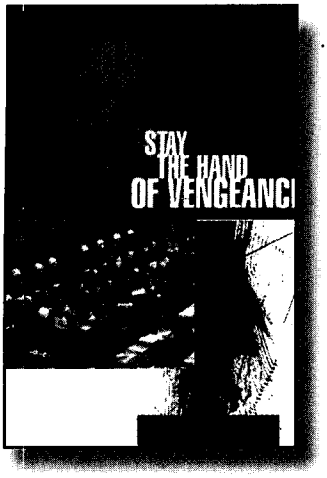

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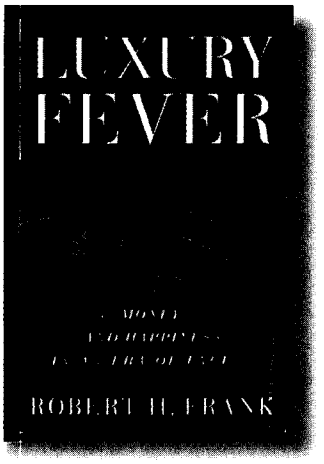

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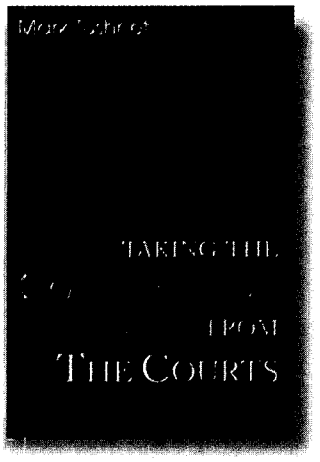

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